

LANDMARKISM VS. INTERDENOMINATIONALISM:

**An Analysis of Some of the Doctrinal Errors of George Zeller and
the Middletown Bible Church**

Abstract

A CRITIQUE Of And A REPLY To

George Zeller's

"An Analysis of the Doctrinal Errors of Landmarkism"

As found at www.middletownbiblechurch.org/lochurch/Landmark.htm,

By Curtis Pugh

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director@imbmpodcasts.com

Editor and Publisher's Note:

Some time ago I ran across an article written by George Zeller, the Pastor of the Middletown Bible Church located in Middletown, Connecticut. The article was entitled *An Analysis of the Doctrinal Errors of Landmarkism*. In reading the article I was astounded at the blatant heresy that Mr. Zeller wrote in trying to prove "Landmarkism" was a false doctrine. It was an attack on the writing of Dr. J. R. Graves' book *Old Landmarkism: What is it?* I found that Curtis Pugh had an excellent answer to the heresy purported by George Zeller. I felt that it would be good to present a detailed study in defense of Bible Doctrine concerning the New Testament Church as presented by Mr. Pugh.

You may find Mr. Pugh's article on his official website <http://abaptistvoice.com/English/Books/ACritiqueOfThe%20DoctrinalErrorsOfLandmarkism.htm>.

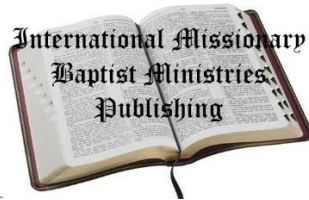
You may also find his short bio there and the work that he and others are doing in Romania.

Even though Mr. Pugh is not associated with the American Baptist Association, he is a Missionary Baptist. Thus, I trust you will appreciate his work with this article.

Joseph F. Roberts, ThD, PhD

Editor

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Preface

The author of the attack against Landmarkism to which I reply is a zealous writer. I do not think he is a thorough or an accurate theologian, but it is not the purpose of this present piece to enter into an attack against Mr. Zeller personally. The method “*ad hominem*,” i.e. to attack the person rather than to answer his arguments, is not worthy of any true Christian and so we only point out some facts about the man as they bear on the subject at hand. Since this is both a “critique” and a “reply” it should be expected that the methods and statements of Mr. Zeller are open to criticism as they vary from Revealed Truth. The reader should be aware that the Bible Church pastor is a modern “Arminian” who denies total depravity, but holds to the view sometimes known as “once saved, always saved.”

Additionally, the reader should be aware that Mr. Zeller holds to a typical “interdenominational Bible church” view of Scripture. I can speak to this issue as one having personal knowledge of that theological system because I for several years was such an “interdenominational Bible church” pastor myself. I was trained in a “denominationally unrelated” Bible college many years ago by men educated in such places as Moody Bible Institute, Dallas Theological Seminary, Wheaton College and Princeton. Following my stint in Bible College, I preached the same views as Mr. Zeller presently espouses. I did not understand “Landmarkism,” feared it, and zealously taught against it as he does. It was only by a careful and thorough study of the New Testament that God made me an independent, Landmark, missionary Baptist – the sort Mr. Zeller condemns as being in error.

Regarding Mr. Zeller’s “INTRODUCTION:”

In his introduction to the article which is found on his church’s website Mr. Zeller makes two statements that require attention. His first misleading statement is seen when he writes: *“They also believe that a historic ‘Baptist succession’ may be traced from John the Baptist to modern Baptist churches in which believer’s baptism and Landmark principles have prevailed.”* He pursues this false charge later in his article in what he calls error number 5 of the Landmarkers – we will deal with it more fully when we come to that part.

John Started No Church

Of course all serious Bible students know that scriptural baptism began with John the Baptist and that John’s baptism was the only baptism experienced by the Lord Jesus Christ and all His apostles. Bible scholars are generally in agreement that John’s baptism has never been replaced and therefore is the only scriptural baptism existent today. Landmarkers do believe in a succession of New Testament Churches that have practiced what Mr. Zeller calls “Landmark principles.” But he wants us to think that missionary Baptists believe that John the Baptist started the Baptist churches. (I do not say “Baptist church” for no such thing exists!) Landmark missionary Baptists, to my knowledge, universally hold that the Lord Jesus Christ established His kind of Church during His earthly ministry as shall be shown from the Scriptures farther on in this article. We do not believe that John the Baptist started any kind of Church.

J.R. Graves

Secondly, it seems to me that in his introduction, Mr. Zeller would have us perceive something bad about J.R. Graves when he writes that he was the “propounder” of Landmarkism.

By this Mr. Zeller suggests that it was in the days of Graves that the “extreme teachings” of Landmarkism began. Indeed Graves was a propounder of old Baptist principles, but Webster says “propound” means “to offer for discussion or consideration” and with that strict definition in mind we will agree with Mr. Zeller’s statement. Baptists in the days of Graves were in danger of compromise with the daughters of the Harlot. Baptists had become numerous and “respectable” in the eyes of their neighbors and were being courted by the Protestants that surrounded them. Graves and others called the dangers of recognizing the daughters of the Harlot as true Churches of Jesus Christ to the attention of Baptists who met and considered his position. What Graves and others actually did was to call Baptists back to their time-honored practices. We are happy to report that the Baptists who were flirting with the Harlot’s daughters reconsidered their path because of the alarm sounded by Graves and others of his time. We are glad they rejected the siren song of the Protestants, the majority of them remaining a separate people for many years to come.

Mr. Zeller Ignorant of Baptist History

However, it is obvious that Mr. Zeller is either ignorant of – or chooses to ignore – the facts of Baptist history. Probably he is just plain ignorant of the facts. When I was in the interdenominational movement, we studied what was called “church history” which was actually the history of the Harlot and her daughters (see Revelation 17:5). We studied almost nothing about the forefathers of modern sound Baptists – and what we were told about them was most often slanderous. If Mr. Zeller would investigate Baptist history he would find it is replete with examples of “Landmarkism” being the standard Baptist doctrine and practice long before the days of J.R. Graves. Thus it is clear that the standard practice of mainline Baptists had been “Landmarkism” long before the term was coined! Mr. Zeller should obtain and read THE MINUTES OF THE PHILADELPHIA BAPTIST ASSOCIATION 1707 to 1807. These records of the first Baptist association in America give ample testimony to the doctrine and practice of those faithful Baptists. The records of Jesse Mercer of Georgia, John Gano of New York, the Baptists of Upper and Lower Canada, the New England Baptists, and many other American associations, as well as those of the British Isles and continental Europe all bear testimony to the consistent historical actuality of “Landmarkism” from earliest of times. So Mr. Zeller has not just set himself in opposition to modern “Landmarkers,” but to multiple generations of sound Baptists who have existed down through the “Christian centuries” and have faithfully believed and practiced what Mr. Zeller regards as “errors.”

Unnecessary Sarcasm

I think Mr. Zeller’s contempt for Landmarkers is seen in his sarcasm when he writes: *“If you consider yourself to be a Landmark Baptist and if any of the following ‘errors’ do not apply to you, then you are to be commended.”* Such a seemingly prideful position as he takes is typical

of “Bible church” people. I well remember when I was captive to their system how we used to “look down our spiritual noses” at those “poor misled Baptists” and their narrow and shallow views.

The Aim of This Work

As a busy preacher doing mission work in a former communist country I have little time to reply to such an enemy as Mr. Zeller. My situation is aggravated because of ongoing weaknesses due to health problems. However, since Mr. Zeller has fired first and hurled what we suppose are his best shots at Bible-truth, I dare to take pen in hand against his salvo. We will fire our rounds out of the Old Reliable Weapon, the Written Word of God and believe that the elect people of God will be satisfied that Mr. Zeller’s fortress is reduced to rubble and that he is routed from the field.

“1) The Error of Making the “One Baptism” of Ephesians 4:5 a Reference to Water Baptism.” Here Mr. Zeller would have us believe that the “one baptism” in Eph. 4:5 refers to some kind of “Spirit-baptism.”

Circular Arguments and Careless Methods

The careful reader will notice that Mr. Zeller practices an amazing feat of circular reasoning, basing his major propositions on statements he has not yet proved. When he does this his conclusions fail completely. Furthermore, he displays in this section of his a most careless method of Bible interpretation. He assumes that Paul, the author of Ephesians, is writing to a “universal, invisible church” – and by that he wants us to understand that he means every child of God. (He assumes such a “church” exists and does not bother here to prove it, so his argument falls flat, being based as it is on an unproved premise.) But he goes beyond carelessness and instead of dealing with the passage accurately, he says that Paul is writing about the common experiences of every believer when it is obvious that Paul is writing about the common experiences of the members of the Ephesian Church. Mr. Zeller does not consider that Paul is writing to a real, local, New Testament kind of Church! He goes off into a discourse insisting that there is a oneness that all believers share, failing to notice that Paul writes of the unity or oneness that should exist in the Church at Ephesus.

There is indeed a vital union between Christ and every true believer! This is clearly taught in the Bible, but the Scriptures do not teach that every believer that ever has lived or ever shall live has a vital union with every other true believer. Such an idea approaches unto some kind of mysticism. He misses completely Paul's pointed message to this congregation as to how they should live together and serve together as one because of the things they share in common. Instead he theorizes on some kind of universal unity he imagines is taught in the Bible.

Sound Rules of Bible Interpretation Discarded

He tries to say that the "one baptism" of Eph. 4:5 is not water baptism because "*Water baptism is not something that all saved persons share in common.*" But he fails to note that Paul was writing to a (local) Church of the New Testament sort and "water baptism" was something that they indeed all did share in common! So Mr. Zeller gets his exercise by jumping to the conclusion that Paul is writing to every saved person in the world when in fact, Paul wrote to a specific (local) Church.

He goes on to cite Galatians 3:26, 27 as referring to this new kind of baptism by the Spirit into the element which is Christ. The simple meaning of the Galatians passage is that believers put on Christ or profess Christ publicly when they are baptized. Bible commentators are almost universally agreed that these two verses in Galatians chapter three refer to the ordinance of water baptism.

But let us go back to Mr. Zeller's treatment of Ephesians 4:5. Every thinking person who understands and believes in the grammatical-historical method of Bible interpretation will see that he has jumped the fence and is running wild in his interpretation of Ephesians 4:5. The grammatical-historical method of Bible interpretation requires that the student of the Word pay strict attention to not only what is written, but also to who wrote it, to whom it was written, when it was written, and under what circumstances. The immediate context as well as the larger context of the whole Bible must be considered and special attention paid to the original words used and their ordinary meanings as well as any special or technical meanings that may be ascribed to them by the writer if such exist. These are logical, common sense rules of understanding the Bible. But following these common sense rules consistently supports the "Landmark" position and so Mr. Zeller discards them often.

Paul's Real Meaning

What did Paul really mean in this passage? In Ephesians chapter 4 Paul cites 7 things that give unity to the members of the New Testament kind of Church to which he wrote. This Church was located in Ephesus – this is the Church to whom and about whom Paul wrote in this instance. Paul pointed out in Ephesians chapter four that there is (1) One body – a local church as we shall show later: (2) One Spirit – Who regenerated all the saved in the Church in Ephesus and Who indwells and operates within them all and Who led them all to be baptized in water: (3) One hope into which all of them were called by the effectual calling of God: (4) One Lord – the Lord Jesus Christ, Head over His churches: (5) One faith – one great system of doctrine: (6) One baptism – water baptism experienced by them all: and (7) One God and Father of all those to whom Paul wrote. These are strong incentives for such a people – i.e. the Church at Ephesus – to labor together in a real, working unity inasmuch as they all have these things in common.

Mr. Zeller Does Not Believe in Only One Baptism

Of course you understand that Mr. Zeller does not really believe in only “one baptism.” He skirts the real issue here – namely that at the date in which Paul wrote Ephesians, there was indeed only one kind of baptism – i.e. water baptism. Whatever you believe at this moment about the word “baptism,” Paul said there was only one! Mr. Zeller, on the other hand, believes in two baptisms – one real (water baptism) and the other an imagined “Spirit-baptism.” But we will deal with “Spirit-baptisms” later. So in his argument for such a “spirit baptism” Mr. Zeller reveals that he does not believe what Paul wrote, for Paul wrote that there is only one (kind) of baptism. Mr. Zeller, you must make a choice: Is the one baptism Paul wrote about water baptism or spirit baptism? Paul said there was only one kind! Which kind is it? You cannot have two or more kinds of baptism and believe what Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:5!

What Do the Standard Commentators Say

But what to the scholars say? Are the commentators in agreement with Mr. Zeller? The old scholars are not infallible, but ought to be considered before bringing in a doctrine that is clearly something new. Surely some among the old ones were spiritual enough, erudite enough, clear-thinking enough to have seen what Mr. Zeller sees or says he sees. Let us take a survey of well-known commentators on this “one baptism.”

Barnes, a Methodist I believe, says in commenting on Ephesians 4:5: “*Whether by immersion, or by pouring, or by sprinkling, they have all been baptized with water; whether it is done in adult years, or in infancy, the same solemn act has been performed on all...*”

Even John Calvin says: “*One baptism, This does not mean that Christian baptism is not to be administered more than once, but that one baptism is common to all...*” So Calvin says Eph. 4:5 refers to water baptism – and interestingly enough, allows for “re-baptism,” a thing our forefathers always disallowed.

The well known John Gill wrote: “*...there were divers baptisms under the law, but there is but one baptism under the Gospel; for John’s and Christ’s are the same; there are, besides, figurative or metaphorical ones, which are so in an improper sense, as the baptism of the Spirit, and the baptism of blood, or of sufferings; but there is but one baptism, literally and properly so called, which is water baptism.*”

The renowned Matthew Henry wrote on this verse: “*One baptism, by which we profess our faith, being baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost...*”

And the great Greek language scholar A.T. Robertson says regarding this verse, “*There is only one act of baptism for all (Jews and Gentiles) who confess Christ by means of this symbol, not that they are made disciples by this one act, but merely so profess him, put Christ on publicly by this ordinance.*”

There you have it! Barnes, Calvin, Gill, Matthew Henry, and A.T. Robertson all agree in saying that Mr. Zeller is out of step with the Bible in his view of Ephesians 4:5!

Conclusion to this Section

So we conclude that in this section of his treatise Mr. Zeller (1) violates sound rules of biblical interpretation, (2) pretends without evidence that Paul writes to some kind of universal, invisible church in Ephesians chapter four instead of to a real New Testament kind of Church, (3) bases his argument on the existence and supposed “Spirit-baptism” common to all the saved ones – a thing he has not yet nor cannot ever prove, (4) opposes the clear statement of Paul that there exists only one kind of baptism by insisting that there are two kinds, and (5) flies in the face of renowned commentators and scholars in his insistence that the “one baptism” of Ephesians 4:5 is not water baptism.

So who is in error here? Is it the Landmark Baptists who insist on understanding Paul’s words in the light of the context in which they were written? Or does the error belong to Mr. Zeller who in zeal for his view disregards all sensible rules of Bible interpretation? We leave the conclusion to the thoughtful reader who will doubtless see the error of Mr. Zeller.

“2) The Error of Understanding 1 Corinthians 12:13 as a Reference to Water Baptism.”

Poor Scholarship or Poor Understanding of English

Again, the first thing Mr. Zeller does is jump the boundaries of sound interpretation by saying that *“First we should notice that this baptism is the experience of every believer...”* This is just poor scholarship or a deliberate attempt to deceive his readers! The baptism about which Paul writes is his own experience and the experience of those to whom he writes. When Paul writes “we” he includes himself and those to whom he was writing. Honesty demands that you go no further than that with his words.

Let me illustrate. If I wrote, for example, “I will pick you up at 8:30 AM at your office and we will drive to the Bible conference.” You do not understand that the “we” in the last part of that sentence refers to all who might read that sentence. You, a sensible person, understand that the “we” refers to (1) the writer, and (2) the person or persons addressed. To make the “we” mean all who might read these words for the next 2,000 years is an absurdity. But Mr. Zeller takes the “we” of 1 Corinthians 12:13 and stretches it to include all those who were saved when Paul wrote, all who had been saved previously and had died, and all those who would eventually believe right up until the end of this age. He enlarges the “we” beyond all common sense rules of Bible interpretation. And he does this just to try to prove his point! By doing this, his argument is faulty and he fails to prove anything.

What Paul is saying in this verse is that he had been baptized in water and so also in a similar manner had the members of the local, New Testament Church in Corinth.

Bible Metaphors

Mr. Zeller insists that this baptism is a Spirit-baptism and puts all believers into one “body.” He does not deal honestly with the metaphors used to teach us about the Church. Obviously the term “body” is a metaphor or word picture designed to convey spiritual truth. We Landmark Baptists rejoice in the truth that every New Testament Church is a real, functioning “body” with

Christ as a real, functioning Head! Now, we ask, just where is Mr. Zeller's kind of "body" located? What has his kind of "body" ever done? Does he draw his salary and expense account from this "body?" Of course not!

The word "body" is one of several metaphors (word pictures) used to describe a New Testament kind of Church. "Chaste virgin" is another as are "building," "temple," etc. Notice that all these metaphors are all local in nature. Nobody ever heard of a "universal building" or a "universal body." Using such terms as Mr. Zeller does is contradictory to the nature of the very words used and also contrary to logic. A "building" which exists only in bricks and stones and bits of mortar scattered throughout the age of grace and around the world cannot be conceived to be a "building" in any real or useful sense. Such a thing would have no real existence as parts of it are dead and parts are yet to be saved and thus in his kind of "body."

"Body" is clearly a metaphor used to portray how a local Church is to be a tool of service to its functional Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. Mr. Zeller's mystical, invisible, universal "body" – if such a thing really existed – would be grisly body-parts scattered over both time and space and even into Heaven itself – not a body at all. Such a "body" as Mr. Zeller sets before us has never accomplished anything. It has never met together, heard a sermon, observed a scriptural ordinance, sent out a missionary, ordained a preacher, disciplined a wayward member, or done anything that a real Church-body ought to do and can do. It is an absolutely useless thing, necessary and suitable only to Protestant theology. In point of fact, there is no such thing taught in the Bible! Mr. Zeller's universal "body" exists only in the theological briefcases and heads of those Protestants who need such a "universal church" – a subject we will deal with farther along in this article.

Mr. Zeller then proceeds to argue that this verse must of necessity not mean water baptism because water is not mentioned! This would be laughable if it were not written as a serious argument. As a matter of fact, in the King James Bible, the word "baptism" appears 22 times and not even in one single instance does "water" occur in the verse that contains that word and sometimes does not appear in the verses that make up the context. Would Mr. Zeller have us believe because "water" does not occur in these verses that the word "baptism" used in them means something other than water baptism? If his argument is to "hold water" (pardon the pun) he must insist that these other verses have nothing to do with water baptism either. Of course consistency does not appear to be Mr. Zeller's strong point and he dare not be consistent with his own argument when dealing with other verses on baptism.

We are in perfect agreement with Mr. Zeller that when a sinner is regenerated he is placed into Christ. However, to make Christ the element into which the person is immersed and the Spirit of God the administrator of such a "mystical baptism" is without a biblical basis. Furthermore, it is a perversion of what John the Baptist prophesied that Christ would do.

Greek-i-fying the Bible

But what is the meaning of 1 Corinthians 12:13? Mr. Zeller has in his article by the use of brackets corrected the English Bible to suit his views. In my opinion, it is an obviously weak argument when a man must resort to “proving” his view with only one Bible verse and that one obviously debatable as to its meaning. I am also immediately on guard when anyone must prove their position by resorting to their own private translation – whether it be the Jehovah’s Witnesses and their New World Bible, or some individual preacher such as we have here. And when a man does both: uses only one verse of debatable meaning and then must Greek-i-fy it to try and prove his point, he has no biblical point! Obviously the original languages are helpful in understanding the Bible, but resorting to dictionary definitions and picking and choosing among them to suit your preconceived notions is dangerous and is certainly poor scholarship. Most modern preachers “know” just enough “Greek” to get in trouble and so resort to finding among the various lexicographers some hint of a definition that supports their view. On this they pounce and proclaim: “the Greek says...” when what they mean is the lexicographer says. That is exactly the kind of thing Mr. Zeller has done in this instance.

Consider what the theologian Louis Berkhof (not a Baptist) wrote about the pseudo-science of arguing from the original languages based on dictionary definitions – and picking and choosing a particular definition given by some of them – what I have called “Greek-i-fying:”

“It is necessary to bear in mind that the Lexicons are not absolutely reliable, and that they are least so, when they descend to particulars. They merely embody those results of the exegetical labours of various interpreters that commended themselves to the discriminating judgment of the lexicographer, and often reveal a difference of opinion. It is quite possible, and in some cases perfectly evident, that the choice of a meaning was determined by dogmatical bias... If the interpreter has any reason to doubt the meaning of a word, as given by the Lexicon, he will have to investigate for himself.” (PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION, Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1950), pp. 68, 69.

The Meaning of 1 Corinthians 12:13

First of all notice that this verse teaches that whatever “baptism” means, it is brought about by the Holy Spirit. But here is the question: Does this require that the Holy Spirit “baptize” someone or that He brings about their baptism? A similar grammatical construction with 1 Corinthians 12:13 (“**by one Spirit**”) is found in Luke 2:27 which says: “**And he came by the Spirit into the temple...**” as you can see. There it is recorded that dear, faithful old Simeon entered or came “**by the Spirit into the temple.**” When you read that, do you imagine that the Holy Spirit physically picked Simeon up and transported him into the temple? Does the language

demand that you believe that? Or do you understand that the Holy Spirit led this faithful old servant of God into the temple at just the right time to see the Savior? In similar fashion we do no violence to the Scriptures to understand that those who are all baptized into one body **“by one Spirit”** were led by the Spirit to be so baptized into a local Church-body and were not actually immersed by the Spirit.

Of course non-mystically minded people, people who do not have a theological axe to grind, understand that the “body” of 1 Corinthians 12:13 is a local New Testament Church – a real, useful Church accurately portrayed by the word “body” in a metaphorical sense.

Deliberate Twisting of John’s Prophecy

Next Mr. Zeller becomes confused to the point that he would confuse the reader. He actually writes that this “Spirit-baptism” was predicted by John the Baptist in Matthew 3:11. I must admit that this view is a novelty. In Matthew 3:11 John said of Christ, **“He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost...”** Mr. Zeller does not pay attention to the Bible here at all. The Bible here says that “He” – Christ (the Divine Administrator) – shall baptize or immerse you with or in the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit. Thus the Holy Spirit is seen to be the “element” into which Christ, the Administrator, shall plunge those to whom John the Baptist spoke. You can clearly see the parallel between water baptism and Christ baptizing his Church in or with the Holy Spirit – Christ does the baptizing, thus He is the Administrator: He baptizes them, not into or with the ordinary element, water, but into or with the Holy Spirit. That is what John prophesied and that is what took place on Pentecost once and for all. But Mr. Zeller changes all that and says this verse means that the Holy Spirit is the Administrator and the “church” is the “element” into which the believer is immersed. And it seems he expects the reader to blindly swallow his new interpretation.

John the Baptist in his prophecy (Matt. 3:11) spoke about the coming Jewish feast day of Pentecost. On that day the Risen, Glorified Christ did indeed plunge His little Church into the Holy Spirit, empowering them for spiritual service. Mr. Zeller says nothing of Christ being the Administrator, but rather that the Holy Spirit is the Administrator. He makes this sweeping change without any biblical authority. Such deliberate changing of the meaning of plain words is basic unfaithfulness to the Word of God and leads to confusion rather than understanding. We say shame on Mr. Zeller for such unscrupulous and careless handling of the Word of God!

Here are the facts. The Greek word translated “with” in the phrase “with the Holy Ghost” is the little Greek word transliterated as “en” and is translated 1,902 times in your King James Bible as “in.” It is translated according to Mr. James Strong as “by” 163 times, “with” 140 times, “among” 117 times, “at” 113 times, “on” 62 times, “through” 39 times, and is used miscellaneously 265 times. To do as Mr. Zeller does and insist that the word “with” should be changed to “by” thus trying to make the Holy Spirit the Administrator of this unfelt, unknown, un-experienced “Spirit baptism” is without any solid foundation, to say the least. Again, he has “Greek-i-fied” the Bible trying to prove a point that cannot be proved.

Reliable commentators are divided in their views on 1 Corinthians 12:13. Some of them think the verse refers to some Spirit baptism while others think it speaks of real or water baptism. But it is reckless, to say the least, to build a doctrine on one Bible verse and this is a classic example of such recklessness.

A.T. Robertson, renowned Greek scholar, wrote about 1 Corinthians 12:13 these words: *“First aorist passive indicative of baptizo and so a reference to a definite past event with each of them of different races, nations, classes, when each of them put on the outward badge of service to Christ, the symbol of the inward changes already wrought in them by the Holy Spirit...”* Although Robertson believed in a universal church (an oxymoronic combination of words) here he points out that the Greek means water baptism into the membership of a real Church.

Conclusion to this Section

So, we ask again: Who is right on this point? Is it Mr. Zeller with his insistence that there exists a universal “body” entered into by a “Spirit-baptism” without having proved the existence of either? Or are Landmarkers more consistent with Scripture by believing that the Holy Spirit leads men and women to be baptized in water and thus become members of a real Church-body? Is Mr. Zeller right in believing in two kinds of baptism or are Paul and the Landmarkers right in insisting that there is only one (kind) of baptism – a real, normal, scriptural baptism in the usual element – water? Surely to any thinking person, Mr. Zeller’s contradiction of Paul’s plain statement that there is only one (kind) of baptism shows that his whole argument is in error.

“3) The Error of Beginning the Church before Pentecost and before the Cross.”

Faulty Reasoning

Mr. Zeller continues his practice of circular reasoning, insisting that the “body” and the “church” are both universal and that if we can figure out when the Spirit first baptized believers into this universal church or universal body we can know when the church began. But he has not

demonstrated satisfactorily that either the body or the church is universal. So his major premise is unproved and therefore his entire proposition fails.

The Meaning of Ecclesia – the Church

What is the nature of that entity called in the Greek the “ecclesia” (sometimes spelled “ekklesia”)? Is there a clear and simple way to understand the meaning of the word as Christ and His disciples used it and understood it’s meaning? Can we know what Paul understood by this word “ecclesia” and what he meant when he used it? The answer is, yes, the English reader can know the truth of the matter. B.H. Carroll, in his two published seminary lectures proves that “ecclesia” always means a local, functioning assembly except for a very few times when used in an ideological, conceptual or generic sense. (His work published in English for many years is known as EKKLESIA – THE CHURCH and is available in the U.S. We have recently published the same in the Romanian language and it is available from us at our usual address.) Brother Carroll examines every usage of “ecclesia” – in the New Testament, in the Septuagint, in the Apocrypha, and in the classical Greek writers – and shows that in none of these places does the word hold any “universal” meaning!

The plain facts are these: The word “ecclesia” appears in the Greek New Testament 117 times. It is usually translated in the singular as “church” and sometimes as the plural “churches.” But it is never used of a mystical, universal “church” that includes all of the saved. All the saved together constitute the family of God, but not the Church of God. We will deal more with the nature of the Church under Mr. Zeller’s point number 4 when we come to it.

Consider this: The Lord Jesus Christ taught many parables about the present phase of His kingdom. These were designed to teach that the kingdom was different in nature to the ideas held by the Jews of His time. For instance, the Jews expected that the entire Jewish nation would enter the kingdom (cf. Acts 1:6). However, Jesus taught that there are spiritual requirements to enter the kingdom (cf. John 3:5). But notice this! Jesus never taught even one parable to illustrate that the church was anything different than what His contemporaries understood it to be – and that is a real, local, functioning assembly. Why did He not tell us in some way – in some parable – that the word “church” had two meanings? Why was it not given to Paul to reveal the meaning of such a mystery? The answer is pure and simple: no such secondary meaning or phase of the Church exists! It seems to me that Mr. Zeller and his sort are confusing things that differ – the kingdom of God, the family of God, and the Church of God. These are not one and the same!

A Church Founded on Pentecost Lacks New Testament Ordinances

Mr. Zeller would have us believe that the church began on the day of Pentecost – 50 days after the Lord suffered on Calvary. This position he attempts to prove even though there is not one single Scripture that says or even hints that anything was “born” or started on that particular Jewish feast day. Let me stress that: There is not even one single verse of the Bible that says or even hints that anything was “born” or started on the day of Pentecost!

If the church started on that Pentecost, she has no New Testament ordinances. She has to reach back into the old dispensation for her ordinances for both baptism and the Lord’s Supper were instituted prior to Mr. Zeller’s supposed birthday of the church. Not only that, but the church was commissioned before she existed, according to Mr. Zeller. And the careful Bible reader will notice that She was commissioned in words used to indicate that She did exist at the time of commissioning. Strange, isn’t it, that Mr. Zeller’s New Testament Church has ordinances from a previous dispensation! And even stranger still is the idea that a non-existent church was given the Great Commission! But that is Mr. Zeller’s position when he insists that the church was born on Pentecost.

Jesus Built a Real, Functioning Church

Mr. Zeller insists that the statement of our Lord Jesus in Matthew 16:18 indicates that the church was yet future. That verse says in part: “**...I will build my church...**” Such a statement is indeed in the future tense, but does not necessarily mean that the project was not then underway. A man could start to build a house and speak of his incomplete work just as Jesus spoke of His Church. He might say in a determined voice, “I will build my house!” By this he would mean, “in spite of opposition I am determined to complete building my house.” Jesus’ choice of words does not mean that He was not then presently engaged in building His local assembly or church. His words mean He was going to complete it and promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against it. He meant in spite of all the opposition of the unseen world, He would complete building up His kind of Church.

The nature of a church – a local, functioning assembly called together to conduct business – is consistent with the fact that Jesus called certain men to be with Him. Thus they were a gathered, local assembly and they functioned in an organized way as we shall show. This was the kind of real Church that Jesus built!

21 Things the Church Had Before Pentecost

Bro. S.E. Anderson in one of his books lists 21 things that Christ's (local) Church had before Pentecost. We have already pointed out that they had baptism and the Lord's Supper before Pentecost – Church ordinances before there was a church! We have also pointed out that they had the Great Commission before they existed, according to Mr. Zeller's "Pentecost birthday" theory. Strange! But we will furnish you with Bro. Anderson's complete list. Here it is.

1. Believers before Pentecost had the Gospel. (Matt. 4:23; Acts 19:4)
2. Believers before Pentecost were genuinely converted. (Luke 1:15-17; 19:1-10)
3. Believers before Pentecost were baptized after conversion. (Matt. 3:6-8)
4. Believers before Pentecost had Christ as their Head. (Matt. 23:8)
5. Believers before Pentecost were instructed in Church polity. (Matt. 18:15-20)
6. Believers before Pentecost were ordained. (John 15:16)
7. Believers before Pentecost were commissioned (Matt. 28:16-20)
8. Believers before Pentecost were organized enough for their needs. (John 13:29)
9. Believers before Pentecost had a missions program. (Matt. 10:1- 11:1)
10. Believers before Pentecost had the essentials of church-life. (Evangelism, service and worship, and the presence of Christ among them) (Matt. 4:9; 18:20)
11. Believers before Pentecost had qualified pastors. (John 21:15-17)
12. Believers before Pentecost had the Lord's Supper. (Matt. 26:26-30)
13. Believers before Pentecost had the Holy Spirit. (John 20:22)
14. Believers before Pentecost had Divine power to do Christ's work. (Luke 9:1)
15. Believers before Pentecost sang "in the midst of the church." (compare Heb. 2:12; with Matt. 26:30)
16. Believers before Pentecost had prayer meetings. (Acts 1:14)

17. Believers before Pentecost had business meetings. (Acts 1:15-26)
18. Believers before Pentecost had a membership roll. (Matt. 10:2-4; Acts 1:13-15)
19. Believers before Pentecost were united into a church in such a way that they could be “added unto.” (Acts 2:1 & 41)
20. Believers before Pentecost had Christ as their Foundation and Corner Stone (Matt: 16:18; 1 Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:20)
21. Believers before Pentecost had Christ for a time as their pastor (“poimen”). Eph. 4:11 & John 10:14.

Now we raise this question: What did the church have after Pentecost that she did not have before Pentecost? She lacked one thing prior to Pentecost: The public testimony of God’s power. This was shown to all observers when Christ, the Divine Administrator, immersed His waiting Church into the Holy Spirit with demonstrable power as seen on that day of Pentecost. Prior to Pentecost she existed and lacked nothing that she gained on Pentecost other than that public testimony of Divine favor. So it was with the temple built by Solomon. It was complete and existed prior to the time the visible glory of the Lord filled the house. It was a real temple fitted for the worship and service of God, lacking only the visible Presence of God. (See 1 Kings chap. 8). And the Lord’s Church, prior to Pentecost, was a real, functioning Church, lacking only the manifestation of the glory and power of God. And that lack was filled on Pentecost, once, never to be repeated.

The Holy Spirit Active Prior to Pentecost

Mr. Zeller claims that believers before Pentecost did not have the Holy Spirit, but we read these words in John 20:22: “**And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.**” This took place prior to Pentecost. We do not think this breathing of the Spirit on them was in the place of the extraordinary event that would take place on the coming Pentecost, for then Christ would immerse them into the Holy Spirit. Then they would receive power as Christ had promised. The extraordinary gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost was that about which was spoken in John 7:39. But the new birth comes by the power of the Holy Spirit (John 3:6, 8), not by the will of man (John 1:13), and by this regeneration or new birth the person is made a recipient of the divine nature (1 Peter 1:4). So we ought not to think that the Holy Spirit was unknown or inoperative prior to Pentecost. Does Mr. Zeller expect us to believe that believers prior to Pentecost were not truly regenerate? Does Mr. Zeller want us to believe that believers prior to Pentecost could not be filled with the Holy Spirit? The Scriptures are clear that the Lord Jesus Christ was filled with the Spirit (Luke 4:1) and so John the Baptist

was “...filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb” (Luke 1:15) – that is a difficult admission for any Arminian to admit, but he must do so, and so was John’s mother Elisabeth (Luke 1:41). Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit as well for we see this clearly stated in Luke 1:67. We have already pointed out that Simeon was led by the Holy Spirit into the temple at the proper moment to see the Savior. We could furnish a multitude of other texts, but these instances prove that the Holy Spirit was indeed active even from creation (Genesis 1:2).

Every believer is a “dispensationalist” whether you call yourself that or not, because everybody recognizes that God has dealt with His people differently in different ages or periods of time. I doubt very much that anyone who reads this took a living lamb to a temple this past Saturday and laid his hands on the animal and then confessed his sins. Everyone recognizes that animal sacrifices as a type of Christ have ceased now that the reality has come and fulfilled His work on the hill called Golgotha. Thus you recognize differences in the way God has dealt with His elect people.

The Law Ended and the Gospel Began With John the Baptist

But when did that Old Testament system, that Law system, end. I know that “... **Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.**” (Romans 10:4) However, this verse speaks of personal righteousness and not the end of the Old Testament Law system. Our quest is to find out what the Word of God says, for only the Bible is our safe and sure Guide in matters of spiritual truth. What saith the Scriptures? It does not really matter what John Nelson Darby said, or Coats, or Kelley, or any of that sect named Plymouth Brethren. It does not matter what C.I. Scofield put in his Bible notes or Dallas Seminary teaches nor even what Mr. George Zeller says. The Bible says: “**The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.**” (Luke 16:16) If that statement does not fit well in your understanding or on your dispensational chart, I assure you it is not the Bible that is in error.

John the Baptist is a perplexing dilemma to an interdenominationalist such as Mr. Zeller! I heard one of their great ones, now deceased, Dr. J. Vernon McGee say, “*John the Baptist was an Old Testament prophet that stepped out onto the New Testament stage.*” That is about the best that interdenominational theology can do with John! He always messes up their system of dispensational charts and theories. He just cannot be made to “fit” into their scheme of things. But Jesus said, to the contrary of what Dr. McGee and others have said, “**But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet.**” (Luke 7:16) So John was much more than a prophet! You cannot be an honest student of the Bible and merely relegate John to the Old Testament. The Scriptures certainly do not relegate him to that age as we shall show.

In Luke 16:16 (quoted above) the Lord Jesus said that something ended with John and that something was the Old Testament Law system. John himself proclaimed in Luke 3:9: **“And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees...”** signifying the death of that Old Testament system. To kill a tree, dig around it and cut the taproot and it will die. This is a very clear picture of a part of the ministry of John the Baptist.

The Lord Jesus also said that something began with John the Baptist. His words were: **“...since that time the kingdom of God is preached”** – a reference to the preaching of the Gospel – here called the preaching of the “kingdom of God.” We shall demonstrate that John’s preaching was gospel preaching a little farther on in this piece. The Gospel age or Church age began during the ministry of John the Baptist when Christ took regenerated material prepared (and baptized) by John the Baptist and organized them into His first Church and commanded them what to believe and how to live.

An Old Baptist Witness

The British Baptist historian Robert Robinson writes as follows in his *ECCLESIASTICAL RESEARCHES* (dated 1792 and republished by Church History Research & Archives, Gallatin, TN, 1984) p 32. [brackets and emphasis mine]:

“The new economy began with the baptism of John. The evangelist Mark expressly says so [Mark 1:1] ...However it be, the conception and the birth of Jesus had no influence on the Jewish economy: it was the baptism of John that opened a new state of religion; and before this the new world, or more properly the new age did not begin. ...Certainly John will rise from the dead... We need not wait till that day to know the true character of John, for, as no name of antiquity is less suspected, or more applauded both by Jews and Christians than his, so an infallible judge hath already declared, that John was burning and a shining light, that his authority to baptize was from heaven, and that among them, that were born of women, there had not risen a greater than John the Baptist.” [John 5:35; Matt 21:25; Mark 11:30 Luke 20:4; Matt 11:11].

Strange, is it not, that Robert Robinson, English Baptist, espoused “Landmark views” almost 100 years prior to the rise of J.R. Graves and the coining of the term “Landmarkism” itself. Is this not another demonstration that “Landmarkism” is the historic doctrine and practice of conservative, mainline Baptists?

John’s Gospel Shown to be THE Gospel

John the Baptist began a new message and that message was continued by the Lord Jesus Christ and all God-called New Testament preachers. This fact is easily demonstrated in the Bible. Consider the following passages.

1. John came preaching “**repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**” (Matt. 3:2) This was before Pentecost. Notice what John’s message was.
2. After Jesus’ baptism and John’s imprisonment, we read: “**From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**” (Matt. 4:17) This was before Pentecost. Notice that Jesus continued preaching the same message that John had first preached. Thus it is shown that Jesus did not initiate the preaching of the gospel, but continued the message of John.
3. This is the same message preached by the apostles and other New Testament preachers for we read: “**But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.**” (Acts 8:12) this was after Pentecost.
4. Paul preached this same kingdom message throughout his ministry. “**And he [Paul] went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.**” (Acts 19:8) And again we read about Paul: “**And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into *his* lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and *out of* the prophets, from morning till evening.**” (Acts 28:23) The last recorded actions of Paul in the Acts indicate he was still preaching essentially the same New Testament gospel of the kingdom initiated by John the Baptist and continued by the Lord Jesus Christ. (We understand that Paul had received additional revelations to John, but nothing that did away with repentance and faith.) Paul continued preaching the kingdom message as long as he lived. This is clear from Acts 28:30, 31: “**And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.**”

John’s Gospel and the Gospel of the Grace of God

No doubt some hyper-dispensationalist will say that we do not preach the gospel of the kingdom today: that instead we preach the gospel of the grace of God. I submit to you that properly understood and properly proclaimed they are one and the same gospel. This is demonstrated by Paul’s clear statement in Acts 24:24, 25 which says: “**But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry,**

which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.” Here Paul equates the gospel of the grace of God with the gospel of the kingdom of God! Old Testament days or New Testament age, the only way anyone was ever saved was by grace!

The Lord Jesus said the law ended with John the Baptist and the preaching of the Gospel began with him. We have shown that this same kingdom Gospel was preached by New Testament era preachers. And we have shown that the preaching of the Gospel of the grace of God is the same thing as the preaching of the kingdom of God. But Mr. Zeller assures us that the gospel age, the church age, did not begin until after both John and the Lord Jesus had ceased their respective ministries. He fails to deal honestly with what the Bible has to say about John the Baptist.

The Purpose of John’s Ministry

But what was the purpose of the ministry of John the Baptist? Do the Scriptures tell us what his purpose was? What did he accomplish? Luke 1:16, 17 is a God-given prophecy concerning John the Baptist. It sets forth his ministry clearly. It says: **“And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”**

John prepared the material out of which the Lord Jesus Christ built His Church! That’s it in a nutshell. The disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ had first been disciples of John, having been baptized by him. This is clearly taught in John 1:35-42, for instance, and in the requirement for a replacement for Judas in Acts 1:21, 22. This last passage says that an apostle had to have been baptized by John the Baptist! John’s ministry was a great success! He accomplished what he was sent to do! What greater thing can be said of any God-called preacher?

Interdenominationalism Glorifies the Holy Spirit and Not Christ

I well remember one of the things that God used to motivate me to lay aside the interdenominational “stuff” I had been taught and study only the Word of God. I was a pastor and had been for a few years. I noticed that the people I served seemed to have a higher regard for the Holy Spirit than they had for the Lord Jesus Christ. This troubled me! I knew that the Lord Jesus said about the Holy Spirit, **“He shall glorify me”** in John 16:14, but somehow my ministry and the ministries of other “Bible Church men” whom I knew personally were not resulting in Christ being glorified – not really! Now please understand this: we would have never taught such a thing, but this is what our people “caught” even if we did not teach it. Our people knew that the Lord Jesus Christ came and lived thirty-three-and-one-half years and that the last three-and-one-half

years of His life was active ministry. They got the idea from our overall teaching that Jesus came and failed in His mission – He was rejected and thus unable to build His Church as He said He would do. Then, fifty days after the Lord’s death, the Holy Spirit came and in one day was able to do (on Pentecost) what the Lord Jesus Christ had not been able to do in three-and-one-half years. As I said, we did not openly teach this and did not realize what our people were “getting.” After I saw the result of our interdenominational approach, our ignoring of John the Baptist, our relegating both John and the Lord Jesus to “some older dispensation” other than our own, etc., I began to understand why our people had more love for the Holy Spirit than they had for the Lord Jesus Christ. He, the Holy Spirit, was their great Hero and not the Lord Jesus Christ! They might cry out “Sweet Jesus,” but in reality they looked to the Holy Spirit as their Head and Lawgiver rather than to the Lord Jesus Christ. Since Christ is not glorified by such twisting of Scripture as is done when anyone makes the Holy Spirit the builder of the Church rather than the Lord Jesus Christ, her rightful Founder, Head and Lawgiver, I conclude that the Holy Spirit is not in such teaching. After all, **“he (the Holy Spirit) shall glorify me,”** Jesus said.

Conclusion to This Section

And so, again we ask who is right? Is Mr. Zeller right in contending that the “church” was born on Pentecost? Or have we not shown that the gathered, organized, scripturally baptized disciples were indeed a functioning congregation having all the essentials of Church life? Have we not demonstrated that the Pentecost-birthday-idea of Mr. Zeller adds nothing to those things possessed by the Lord’s Church prior to Pentecost? Is not the position that both the gospel and baptism were initiated by God through John the Baptist the correct view? As a reasonable and thinking Christian, can you really think that the Church (according to Mr. Zeller’s view) must reach back into a pre-church age – back under the Old Testament Law – in order to obtain her baptism, her Supper and her Commission? So who is right on this point: Mr. Zeller and his interdenominational idea that some kind of mystical, universal “church” (the existence of which he has not yet proved) was born on Pentecost because that was the first time the Holy Spirit baptized anyone into the “body” of Christ? Have we not demonstrated that the prophecy given by John was that Christ Himself would be the Administrator of this new baptism? Have we not shown that the Holy Spirit would be the “element” into which men would be baptized - empowered to witness boldly for Christ and the truth? Have we not shown that there was nothing prophesied by John about the Holy Spirit immersing anyone into any thing? We believe Mr. Zeller has failed to prove any of the things for which he contends!

“4) The Error of Denying the Universal Church.”

Mr. Zeller Changes the Bible's Meaning

Mr. Zeller begins by saying: *"We have already established the fact that there is 'one baptism' which places every true believer (not just certain Baptist believers) into the 'one body.'"* The fact is that Mr. Zeller has once again used circular reasoning and jumped to conclusions based on assumptions and mistaken interpretations. We deny that Mr. Zeller has established his idea as a fact at all! In fact, Mr. Zeller has denied that there is "one baptism" and insists that there are two – water baptism and Spirit baptism! He has actually denied what he says he has proved! Thus he has contradicted clear Bible teaching that there is only one kind of baptism today. In spite of the fact that Ephesians 4:5 says there is **"One Lord, one faith, one baptism,"** Mr. Zeller contends that there are two.

Furthermore, he has not demonstrated from the Bible that there exists some kind of baptism by the Holy Spirit into the universal, invisible "church." He has changed the Administrator of that baptism from Christ to the Holy Spirit. Denying that this "baptism" took place once for all on that famous Pentecost, he imagines his kind continues today. He has changed the element from the Holy Spirit into the universal "church" which he imagines exists. It seems to me that he has changed a great many things to suit his preconceived doctrines.

Singular Words Often Used for the Plural

Let us examine the usage of the word "church" (Greek "ecclesia") and its meaning. Mr. Zeller says it has two meanings. He admits that "ecclesia" *"is often used of local churches."* That is an understatement to say the least! The Greek word ecclesia appears 117 times in the text of the New Testament. It is sometimes used in the singular speaking of one specific church and sometimes in the plural speaking of more than one church. These usages total more than 100 instances of the total 117. Yes, indeed! "ecclesia" *"is often used of local churches."* One hundred times out of one-hundred-seventeen times is "often." That much is clear. There are perhaps as many as a half a dozen instances that are debated by those who try to prove the existence of some kind of universal "church."

These debated passages we contend are used in an ideological, or conceptual or generic sense. There is no reason to think they refer to something other than a local gathering. Let us look a bit at languages and the means of conveying ideas. It is a fact that in every developed language there are literary tools used to convey truth. One of these is to speak of a concept or idea using the singular noun as a subject. For instance, I might say: "The automobile has changed the life of the American forever." You will agree that that is a true statement. You understand what I mean by that sentence. Or I might quote old J.B. Moody: "The lion is a ferocious beast." But when sensible people read these two sentences they do not imagine a huge mystical, universal, invisible automobile that has changed the life of some gigantic, universal, invisible American. Neither do they imagine a huge universal lion! People understand – people who do not have a theological axe to grind – that this literary tool does not demand such a literal fulfillment as to require something that is foreign to the meaning of the word or words used. And people with common

sense know that the usual meanings of “automobile,” “American,” and “lion” are “local” in nature and that to imagine any of them as having something “mystical” or “universal” or “invisible” about them is foreign to the meaning of each.

So it is with the word “ecclesia” – most often translated in the King James Bible as “church.” Let us look at one of the favorite verses of those who want to believe in a universal church. They think this verse proves their point, but it fails miserably and instead demonstrates ours admirably. The verse is Ephesians 5:23 and there the Word of God says: **“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.”** Here, say they, is proof positive for it says Christ is Head over THE church. So, they say, there must be only one great, mystical, universal, invisible church spoken of here. But wait a minute! Let us be reasonable and logical and sensible about the English language. If, and I say IF, this verse by its construction demands that we believe in a universal church because it says that Christ is the Head of THE church, then we MUST also believe that somewhere there is THE universal husband who is head of THE universal wife! But sensible people know that the word “husband” is used in the singular to represent to us all husbands. Thinking people know that the word “wife” is used in the singular to represent all wives. And so it is with the word “church.” The singular is used to represent all real, local, New Testament kind of Churches – the kind Jesus built! There is no proof here as to the existence of “THE” universal church anymore than there is proof of the existence of “THE” universal husband and “THE” universal wife! Mr. Zeller’s “proof” is found only in a poor understanding of literary devices and a curious insistence that his universal, invisible “church” exists even though he cannot prove that it exists.

And so these few usages of “church” in a generic or ideological sense never require that the reader believe in some mystical, universal, invisible something that is somehow called a “church.” The word “church” has only one meaning as we have demonstrated.

Origin of the Universal Church Idea

How did the idea of a universal, invisible “church” become so popular? If, as Landmarkers contend, it did not originate in the Word of God, how did it come to be so widely accepted? Let us examine the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic idea of a universal church. This will help us to understand the present situation among Protestants. Both the Orthodox and the Catholics teach that they are the true church – the true universal visible church. They teach that there is no salvation outside the church – their universal visible church. The idea of a universal, invisible “church” was popularized by the Protestant Reformers. When the first Protestant Reformers found themselves ejected from the Church of Rome, they were thought to be lost, for the Catholics teach that salvation is in the universal visible church, i.e. the Roman Catholic Church. So the Reformers had to come up with an alternative kind of “church” since they too believed that salvation was in a “church.” And so they popularized the idea that the true “church” is a universal, but invisible church. So the Catholic party teaches that salvation is in the universal visible church. Protestants, such as Mr. Zeller, teach that salvation is in the universal invisible church.

Let the Protestants deny it if they can, but to them salvation is in their invisible, mystical, universal “church.” According to them, if you are in this “church” you are saved and when you are saved you are placed in this “church.” That is exactly what Mr. Zeller is arguing about. The main difference between the Catholic view and Mr. Zeller’s Protestant view being, it seems to me, that the Catholic party thinks that they can excommunicate a person from the universal visible church and that person becomes lost. Mr. Zeller, however, does not believe that anyone can be excluded from the universal invisible church and so once you are in it, you cannot get out of it.

Sound Baptists do not believe that salvation is in any church! We believe that salvation is in Christ and that acceptable worship and service is to be found in a New Testament kind of Church. Salvation is not dependent on church membership and church membership does not guarantee salvation! This is the biblical position and this is the historic, mainline, conservative, “Landmark” Baptist position.

The Universal Church Is a Corrupt Thing

This brings us to another most interesting and revealing point: Mr. Zeller, in his insistence that there are two kinds of “churches” – one a local and a visible gathering and the other mystical and unknowable – has a serious problem on his hands. For the Bible teaches that Christ’s Church is to be pure. She is portrayed as a church that is to have the character of a “chaste virgin” in 2 Corinthians 11:2. This is another metaphor given to tell us about Christ’s Churches. In order for a real Church to be pure (not perfect) each Church has disciplinary powers over all the members. (See, for instance, Matthew 18:15-18). Now, according to Mr. Zeller and the Protestant view, Christ’s true, super-duper, big, important, universal, invisible church is not pure! She is not a “chaste virgin!” That metaphor does not fit their invisible church in any way! No matter what sin a true believer might fall into, no matter what reproach he or she might bring upon the Name of Christ, there is no church-meeting that can be held to discipline such a sinning member - once you are in this mystical, invisible, universal “church,” you cannot get out of it.

So, while Christ’s little, local, relatively-unimportant Churches (in Mr. Zeller’s view) are to be like pure virgins espoused to Him as His bride, the “real thing” – the “important thing” to Mr. Zeller, i.e. the invisible “church,” is corrupt. It has members that ought to be excluded from it, but cannot. A man can be a member of Mr. Zeller’s universal, invisible “church” and espouse heresy, be a schismatic, a troublemaker, be a sower of discord among brethren, be an idolater given over to covetousness (Colosians 3:5), be an adulterer, an extortioner, a slanderer, or be guilty of any sins that would require his exclusion from the fellowship of a “local” real Church. Remember, according to Mr. Zeller, when a person is saved he is automatically immersed by the Spirit into this universal, mystical, invisible “body-church” and he can’t get out and cannot be put out! So while the little not-so-important churches are to be pure, the big one – the really important “church” – is a corrupt church and no chaste virgin at all. Mr. Zeller, we think you have a serious problem here as a result of your unbiblical position!

A Proper View of the Headship of Christ

Next Mr. Zeller has a problem with the biblical concept of the Headship of Christ. He seems to imagine that Christ is only a Head and that He is somehow attached to the universal “body” as if the body completed Christ and as if Christ were dependent on the “body” to sustain Him. Mr. Zeller, we think, believes in Christ as the organic Head of Mr. Zeller’s idea of a universal “church-body.”

To correct Mr. Zeller’s idea and perhaps help some who wonder about such things, we duplicate below a tract that we are about to publish in the Romanian language.

We are greatly indebted to Baptist elder Chuck Hunt, pastor of the Pleasant View Baptist Church, Bromley, Kentucky, U.S.A. for allowing us to quote from his unfinished, and yet unpublished work on this great subject. The concepts set forth in this little piece are, we believe, first of all Biblical and secondly, of great importance. We look forward to the publication of Brother Hunt’s completed work.

Unless otherwise noted, all quotations are from the work of Brother Hunt as noted above.

The Tract Itself

“The Bible is filled with similes, metaphors, parables, and it even has its place for allegories. A real possibility exists of wrongfully associating one of these literary devices uniquely developed within a particular context with a teaching foreign to that context. In which case, neither the metaphor nor the incorrectly associated truth is given due regard, and improper deductions can be drawn from the carelessly associated metaphor that color that particular doctrine with shades of confusion. The elucidation the metaphor should have added is also lost. The teaching of an organic and vital union to Jesus Christ is a truly biblical teaching that is glorious and is demonstrated in Jesus’ metaphor of the vine and the branches, but the Pauline metaphor of Jesus Christ as the head of the body does not teach this truth. The purpose of this book” (pastor Hunt’s book – ed.) “is to present the nature and meaning of the metaphor of Jesus Christ as head of His body, the church, while consistently honoring the grammatical historical method of interpretation.”

“It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words. The following sketch will perhaps prove this saying true. Its purpose is to contrast the generally accepted position of Christ as head of his body with the one put forth in this volume. As you look at these two diagrams...

ask yourself, ‘How is Jesus Christ the head of His body?’”

Let it be clear to every reader: the great truth that every true believer has a vital union to the Lord Jesus Christ is not in question. The Bible clearly teaches this great doctrine and we believe it. However, the metaphor of Christ as head of the body is not designed to teach this truth and is greatly misleading, bringing with it misconceptions as to the nature and importance of the church.

If Christ is the organic head of the church as in the first illustration above, the church is only the trunk. Neither Christ is complete, for He is only a head, and neither is the church complete for it is only a trunk and not a complete body. But this view is absolutely contrary to Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 12:21, which says: "*And the **eye** cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the **head** to the feet, I have no need of you.*" Such a body as Paul uses to portray the church definitely has a head! He writes of "the eye" in contrast to "the hand" and "the head" in contrast to "the feet." **Paul's metaphor does not allow us to view Christ as the organic head of the church! It just will not allow it!**

"If one interprets the head-body metaphor in Ephesians 1:22-23 as organic there is a mixing of metaphors. Ephesians 1:22-23 states, '*And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in*

all.’ Here we have a strange picture indeed if Christ metaphorically is the head of the body organically, for all things are placed under His feet. He is one and at the same time a head which has feet... When this passage is exegeted properly a glorious truth emerges. Just as the fullness of the spiritual gifts, with all their diversity, dwelled in Jesus Christ in the unity of his being, so they exist in their fullness and unity in each assembly (metaphorically a body) over which He reigns sovereignly and to which he chooses to fill and nourish as His body just as a man chooses to nourish his wife.”

“Not only does this head-body metaphor as one body (the organic idea) weaken the doctrine of our union to Jesus Christ, but interpreting it in this way causes one to miss the beauty of what is meant to be portrayed when viewed correctly... consider Ephesians 5:22-23. Verse 22 states that ‘the husband is the head of the wife **even as** Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body.’ Here a comparison is set up. If you want to know how this metaphor is meant when it speaks of Jesus Christ as head of the body (the church) meditate on this analogy (set forth in Eph. 5:22 – ed.). The untenableness of the composite head-body metaphor” (organic view) “is quickly revealed. Is the wife thought to be an headless trunk or a non-person? Reflecting on the diagrams (above) which one best fits this analogy? The union depicted is not a salvational union, but a sanctifying, maturing, developing oneness, a functional type of union” (as portrayed in the second illustration above). “The head is portrayed as a complete body or person, just as a husband would be viewed, lovingly exercising headship over a complete body or person, just as a wife would be viewed. The husband nourishes and cherishes his wife, just as a complete Christ nourishes and cherishes the church (His body). Jesus Christ is the Savior of the body just as it is first depicted in 1 Corinthians chapter twelve. This body over which Christ is head has also a head no different in significance than the feet, both being necessary to constitute the body of Christ at Corinth.”

Perhaps here we should interject this important biblical fact. All, we repeat, **all** the metaphors used to help us understand the nature and function of the church are local in nature. A bride is local, a building is local, a temple is local and a body is necessarily local in nature. Ten, or a thousand, or a million body parts scattered throughout time and throughout the world does not, indeed **cannot** in any sense constitute a body! This is consistent with the fact that the church is a local bride, building, temple and body. If you desire to learn how the Greek word *ecclesia* (church) is consistently used in the New Testament and as well in the Septuagint, the Apocrypha and also in classical Greek usage, contact us for a free copy of B.H. Carroll’s *ECCLESIA – THE CHURCH* in the Romanian language. Except for a few places where *ecclesia* is used of a concept or idea (generic use) the word *ecclesia* always is used of a real, organized, official gathering of people in a place. **To make Christ the head of a universal, invisible, mystical “body” in an organic sense is to miss the real and very practical teaching of the New Testament. Christ is the real, functioning head over each of his churches – that is the truth taught by the New Testament.**

“First Corinthians 12:18 helps us understand this truth, *”But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.”* This action is by the work of the Holy Spirit as verse 13 explains, *“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.”* The Holy Spirit leads those saved to a particular assembly to be baptized in water and become a functioning

member of a body of Christ. So in salvation we are regenerated, gifted, and designed as a particular member of a body as fashioned by God's design, but we do not fulfill that purpose until we leave the world and join a body of Christ." (To teach that there is more than one kind church entered by more than one kind of baptism – eg. "water baptism" and "spirit baptism" – is not only a misinterpretation of 1 Corinthians 12:13, but a violation of Ephesians 4:5 which says there is only one kind of baptism! – publ.)

"There is no universal, invisible body that we instantly become a member of at the moment of salvation. This whole doctrine finds its strength in a misunderstanding of the head-body metaphor. The properly understood metaphor depicts a union that is not organic and vital, but relational and functional. It is not depicting our salvational union of being placed in Christ, but it is depicting a corporate functional union of believers set by God in a metaphorical body which is an organized assembly of believers, His church. There is as much difference between being in Christ and being in the body of Christ as there is between the Son of God and the Son of God incarnate who upon earth was local and visible and still is as the Lord in Heaven. Being in Christ refers to salvation, and being in the body of Christ refers to a work of sanctification; wherein a divinely organized assembly of believers corporately exercises and displays the diverse gifts of Christ in the unity created by the Holy Spirit."

"The composite head-body metaphor is the myth that needs to be separated from the real metaphor of a complete body (his church) over which Jesus Christ presides as head. Each true New Testament church is a body which is his by possession and relationship and to which He is the Head." (End of tract.)

Answers to Mr. Zeller's Questions

With the understanding in mind that Christ is NOT an organic "Head" attached to a headless "body" but is the real functioning Head over each of His Churches, we shall proceed to answer Mr. Zeller's questions as he numbered them.

"...1. If Christ is the Head of all things to the church, and if the church is composed only of local Landmark Baptist churches, then does this mean that true believers who are not part of Landmark congregations HAVE NO HEAD? How can a true believer be without Christ as Head?" Mr. Zeller shows his lack of understanding again. No Landmarker ever taught that "the church is composed only of Landmark congregations." We believe in Churches – not a "church." Also Mr. Zeller demonstrates that he is confused about the nature of the Headship of the Lord Jesus Christ. He would have us believe that his "universal, invisible body" is a headless thing somehow attached to Christ who is a bodiless Head. But we have shown above that the organic Headship of Christ is not a scriptural concept at all. Christ is a real functioning Head over His churches! He is complete and not dependent upon the Churches to sustain Him! He governs them as their only Head and Lawgiver. He is Head over His Churches as a husband is head over his wife.

True New Testament Churches have no dictator-pastors or governing boards or denominational overlords to rule over them. They are pure, independent democracies governed by their Head, the Lord Jesus as revealed in His Word. Saved men and women who are disobedient to Christ for a time have rejected His Headship over them and so in that sense have no head. Consider this: the Bible says that Christ is the **“head of all principality and power.”** (Colossians 2:10), but Satan and his demons are not voluntarily subject to Christ so in a sense have rejected His headship. While Christ exercises absolute sovereignty over them it would not be proper to speak of Christ as being their Head in the same way He is Head over His true Churches. In fact, those individuals who are living in rebellion to Christ by rejecting baptism administered by a scriptural administrator (a true Church of the Lord Jesus Christ) are rebels and so they have no functioning Head! They exist outside a true New Testament body (Church) and Christ is **“the Head over all things to the church.”** Nowhere does the Bible say that Christ is the Head over rebellious wayward church members. Nor does this Scripture talk about Christ being the Head over individual believers. Mr. Zeller keeps confusing “churches” with individual believers.

“...2. Are only the Landmark churches indwelt by the Spirit? Have all other assemblies of believers been abandoned by the Spirit?” Again Mr. Zeller attempts to take a passage addressed to a local New Testament Church and treat it as if it were addressed to his mystical, universal, invisible idea of a church. We would answer this way: Every true believer is a believer because he has been regenerated. Having been regenerated he is indwelt as an individual by the Holy Spirit. He has been made a partaker of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). Paul, in Ephesians 2:21-22, speaks of the work which the Holy Spirit did in bringing the members of a real Church (local) together as a “building.” (“Building” is another local metaphor of a real, visible church!)

The Lord Jesus Christ made it clear that worship which is based on false doctrines and not prompted and led by the Holy Spirit is unacceptable to God. He said, **“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth”** (John 4:24). Since the Holy Spirit indwells every truly regenerate person, the Spirit is in them individually even when they gather in unscriptural assemblies that may claim to be churches but which teach some false doctrines. However, I doubt that the Spirit of God is present in the midst of a false church in the sense He is present when a true Church gathers scripturally and corporately for worship, prayer, hearing the Word, and conducting matters of Church business. I doubt that Christ is glorified in such man-made assemblies that exist in opposition to those assemblies that are Christ’s. If their worship and service is unacceptable to God, it must be that the Spirit of God did not direct either one.

But as usual, in his persistent misinterpretation of Scripture, Mr. Zeller confuses what is said to and about a real Church (this one in Ephesus) and tries to interpret it as if it had been written to and about his universal, invisible “church.”

I am reminded of the worship of the Samaritans in Jesus’ day. Jerusalem was the place where true worship took place and where the truth of salvation was demonstrated and proclaimed in word and sacrifice. Jesus said so when he proclaimed **“Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.”** (John 4:22) But the Samaritans had a

temple like the one in Jerusalem! They had the same Old Testament Scriptures as the Jews had! They had both a priest-hood and sacrifices like the Jews in Jerusalem had! They were expecting the Messiah to come just as the Jerusalem Jews were (see John 4:25)! What was lacking in their worship? The problem was that their temple and their worship services were not ordained of God – they were man-made. Their doctrine and their practice appeared to be correct, but their origin was human rather than divine. Jesus said that they worshipped, but they did not know what they worshipped! I submit that when you start your own “church” without any connection to the Church Jesus built, even though you are meticulous in your doctrine and look like and operate like the Churches descended from the Church that Jesus built, you don’t know what you worship!

Whenever you go beyond the pages of the Revealed Word of God in either doctrine or practice, you don’t know what you are doing. You have left off following the Guide Book and have substituted your own ideas just as the Samaritans did. Because of this their worship, however “spiritual” it may have seemed and however “blessed” and emotionally satisfied their adherents may have felt, and no matter how “edifying” the preaching may have been, none of it was acceptable to God! So it is today with the Harlot and her Protestant daughters, regardless of appearances in men’s eyes and the feelings of men’s senses. Individually, all the saved are possessed of the Spirit of God. Corporately, only Christ’s true Churches have been **“builted together for an habitation of God through the Spirit”** (Eph. 2:22) and are thus indwelt corporately as God’.

“...3. Is God demonstrating and pointing out His wisdom only through the Landmark Baptist churches? Does God say to the angels: ‘If you want to learn of My manifold wisdom, consider only the Landmark Baptists, but don’t consider all of the other born again believers whom I have saved by My grace’?”

First of all, not every church that is called a “Landmark Baptist” Church is necessarily a true Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Correctness in origin is necessary, but so also are correct doctrine and practice. Doubtless there are some churches called “Landmark Baptist” which have erred in doctrine and have departed from historic Baptist practice to the point that their “candlestick” has been removed and they are no longer a testimony to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am sure that every reader will agree with that last statement. It is better to say that the true Churches are to be found today among the people called Baptists.

Let me ask a question or two, please. Does God send His angels to the Orthodox and Catholic churches to learn of His manifold wisdom? Of course not, because they are not His (kind) of churches. Would Mr. Zeller have us believe that God sends His angels to the daughters of this filthy Harlot to learn of His manifold wisdom? Of course not, because the daughters of the Harlot are also themselves Harlots as He said in Revelation 17:5. Why are these younger Harlots called “daughters?” Are we not to understand that they are daughters in that they came out from their Harlot Mother? We know who the Mother is and if we look around to see who came out from her, we will see the Protestant churches. The Baptists did not come out from the Harlot or her Daughter churches! It is not Landmark Baptist Churches that have a lineage going back

through the Protestants to Rome. It is Mr. Zeller's kind of churches that have such a polluted lineage.

We do not claim that all Baptists have always practiced consistently with their knowledge. Mr. Spurgeon is one whom we believe did not, but as he said it so well, let the well-known British Baptist pastor of a bygone generation say it for us.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said: "I am not ashamed of the denomination to which I belong, sprung as we are, direct from the loins of Christ, having never passed through the turbid stream of Romanism, and having an origin apart from all dissent or Protestantism, because we have existed before all sects." (C.H.S. NEW PARK STREET PULPIT, Vol. 16, 1860, (Pasadena, TX, Pilgrim Publications, 1973 reprint), p. 66.)

Again Mr. Spurgeon waxed bold and said, "We believe that the Baptists are the original Christians. We did not commence our existence at the reformation, we were reformers before Luther or Calvin were born; we never came from the church of Rome, for we were never in it, but we have an unbroken line up to the apostles themselves. We have always existed from the very days of Christ, and our principles, sometimes veiled and forgotten, like a river which may travel underground for a little season, have always had honest and holy adherents." (C.H.S., METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT, Vol. 7, 1861, (Pasadena, TX, Pilgrim Publications, 1973 reprint). P. 225).

Surprising, isn't it, that such "Landmark ideas" were held by Mr. Spurgeon! The Cotton Grove Resolutions were adopted in 1851. The influence of J.R. Graves must have quickly and powerfully crossed the Atlantic with sufficient speed and force as to cause the great Charles Spurgeon to consistently so speak of the origin of the Baptists just as Graves did – and less than 10 years after the Cotton Grove meeting! Or should we be reasonable and admit that mainline Baptists have consistently held throughout the "Christian centuries" that they are the churches that have an "unbroken line" back to Christ and His apostles.

I submit that God's angels only learn of His plan and His free and sovereign grace by looking in on true, New Testament Churches and not by looking in on counterfeit ones.

"...4. Are only the Landmark Baptists included in the one body? Are all other godly saints in the world therefore excluded from this body? How can such a teaching be used to promote CHRISTIAN UNITY?"

Here we go again! Mr. Zeller insists that there is “one body” and by that he means that there is some kind of mystical, universal something out there that he calls a “body.” The plain teaching of the Bible is that “body” is a metaphor teaching us about the Churches and speaks of the local nature of each Church, among other things. If, as Mr. Spurgeon and historic mainline Baptists have consistently maintained, the Baptists are the original Christians, then all other man-made churches are false and not “bodies” or Churches at all in the scriptural sense. So, yes, only members of true Baptist Churches are members of such a true, local “church-body” as the Scriptures speak. All other saved people are not a part of a “church-body” i.e. a true New Testament kind of Church – a sound Baptist Church. Saved people outside of membership in a true New Testament Church are not members of any God-recognized church. It is that simple.

Now to the matter of what Mr. Zeller terms “CHRISTIAN UNITY.” He has gone off on an unscriptural path once again, suggesting that the churches of God are to try to manufacture or “promote” a “Christian unity.” Such a term is NOT found in the Bible, though the Bible speaks of unity. In Ephesians 4:3 Paul told the Ephesian Church that they were to endeavor to **“keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”** Notice that they were not to try to MAKE a unity, but to keep the unity that the Spirit had produced in them as a (local) true New Testament Church. Mr. Zeller seems to be possessed of the idea that Christians are to try to MAKE some kind of unity, but this idea is foreign to the Scriptures. Furthermore, the Bible speaks of the unity of the faith in Ephesians 4:13. Such a unity is based on the Word of God! Baptists believe that the Bible is the only basis of true unity. Only as children of God are obedient to the teachings of the Word of God in a New Testament Church can they worship and serve God together in real unity. This is that for which Baptists have contended for generations.

“...5. Is Christ the Head only of the Landmark Baptists? Is Christ the Saviour only of the Landmark Baptists? What about true believers who are no associated with Landmark churches? How can they be saved if they have no Saviour?”

As we have shown above, only local churches can be spoken of as a “body.” We are not foolish enough to contend that all “Landmark Baptist Churches” are true Churches of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have stated that a church must be scriptural in (1) origin, (2) doctrine, and (3) practice to be a true Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. We would think it better to say that Christ is the Head only of true New Testament Churches – Churches that have a scriptural origin, a scriptural doctrine and a scriptural practice.

Mr. Zeller poses a question based on a wrong assumption. He assumes, again and without biblical proof, that the word “body” refers to a universal, invisible “church.” The simple statement that Christ is the **“savior of the body”** indicates that Christ is not only the Head of each New Testament Church, but He is the Savior of each one – in Ephesians 5:23 such a “local” Church is referred to as a “body.”

“...6. Did the Lord Jesus give Himself on the cross only for the Landmark Baptists? Are they the only “church” that Christ loved and gave Himself for? Are we so narrow as to limit God’s love and Christ’s death to a certain sect.”

Regarding Christ’s love: In John 11:3 we read these words: **“Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.”** Mary and Martha, sisters of Lazarus, sent word to the Lord Jesus. They said that Lazarus was the one that Jesus loved. That is the plain meaning of the simple words before us. Again in John 21:7 we read: **“Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter...”** I believe all students of the Bible are in agreement that **“the disciple whom Jesus loved”** was John. Now I ask two simple questions: Do these two statements contradict each other? Do these two statements prove that Jesus did not love others? One says Jesus loved Lazarus and the other says Jesus loved John, but we do not jump to the conclusion that these two statements are contradictory because of what they say. Nor do we conclude that because Jesus is said to love these two that He did not love others. These verses speak of a special love and comradeship that existed between Jesus and these two followers of His. I think every reasonable person will see these things properly and understand that.

So, we ask, why does Mr. Zeller try to say that because the Bible says that Christ **“loved the Church”** it necessarily implies that there were no others whom Christ also loved. But the “church” Jesus loved was the Church He built – the real assembly of scripturally baptized believers who met with Him and were His followers during His earthly ministry. In John 13:1 the Bible says: **“Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.”** This verse also speaks of Christ’s love for His Church – here spoken of as **“his own.”** And He demonstrated that love **“unto the end”** by going out to meet those who came to arrest Him – an act of protection which benefited His Church. (See John 18:4). So such a statement while it does not eliminate Christ’s love for others does set forth clearly His special love for His Church.

So also the statement that Christ gave Himself for the Church implies a special sense in which the sacrifice of Christ was made for His Church, but does not necessarily mean that Christ did not die for individuals outside His Churches. As a matter of fact, the vast majority of those for whom Christ died were outside of His Churches when He died for them. Christ died to redeem Old Testament saints who were never and shall never be in His Churches. And those of us who are saved and alive today were certainly outside Christ’s Churches when He died for us.

If Mr. Spurgeon and the vast majority of mainline Baptists down through the centuries are correct and therefore it is among the people called Baptists that the true Churches of Jesus Christ are to be found, then this special love is not just for *“a certain sect.”* That “certain sect” is a special people and has an unbroken line up to the Lord Jesus Himself through the Church He established – a real, “local,” functioning New Testament Church. The Lord’s Church has had a perpetual existence through the succession of Churches that have come down from Her. Without a doubt I would say that the Lord loves His true New Testament kind of Churches. They are faithful to Him, they glorify Him rather than some man as their founder, they have suffered for

Him and for His truth down through the centuries and they long for His return. Should He not love them?

But Mr. Zeller does not want to enter into a discussion of the love and the hatred of God, for as a modern “Arminian” he cannot deal honestly with the hatred of God. The Bible says that God hated Esau before he was born and therefore before he had ever done anything (See. Romans 9:11-13). The Bible says God hates some people – notably liars and those who sow discord among brethren (Proverbs 6:19). In fact, the Bible says that God hates **“all workers of iniquity”** (Psalm 5:5). Yes, the Bible is so narrow as to say that God hates some people and that He hated them before they were born. I am sure Mr. Zeller has a way to explain away Romans chapter 9, but I doubt it is satisfactory to the serious Bible student.

Furthermore the Bible is clear that God hates the Harlot, her Daughters and the Abominations of the earth. This we are told in Revelation 17:5, 6, **“And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.”** The offspring of the Harlot are an abomination to God – that word means that God regards them with extreme disgust and hatred according to Webster.

Which brings us to another matter that ought to be cleared up. God’s people are called upon to come out of the false religious system pictured as the Harlot and her Daughters, etc. Revelation 18:4 says: **“And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”** To “come out” does not mean to leave the false churches and then not be joined to a true Church. To “come out” does not mean to leave the Harlot herself and enter into a man-made church. To “come out” means to reject everything about the Harlot as God does. To “come out” means to go outside of that which is respectable and become a faithful member of one of God’s little “unimportant” true New Testament Churches.

This “certain sect” about which Mr. Zeller writes is the only alternative to the Harlot and her Daughters. This “certain sect” called Baptists represents the only churches with a scriptural origin that have among them some who have maintained pure doctrine and practice. These are the true New Testament Churches.

Sound Baptists reject the “baptisms” of both Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholics. We regard them as false churches, their clergy as not being true ministers of Christ and their baptisms as invalid. Simply put, Calvin, Zwingli, Luther and the other Protestant Reformers were Catholics until they were excluded from that organization. But they never came to the true Churches of Jesus Christ for scriptural baptism, ordination and authority. The only “baptism” that they ever had was Catholic baptism, which is no true baptism at all. Now the New Testament pattern is that only baptized men ever administered valid baptism. (Even the Lord Jesus walked more than 60 miles to obtain valid baptism from John the Baptist before entering upon His ministry!) All those persons baptized by the Reformers lack a genuine or valid baptism because the Reformers were un-baptized men, having only Catholic “baptism.” Thus Protestant baptisms, whether Methodist,

Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Unitarian, Episcopal, Nazarene, Pentecostal, Holiness, etc., etc., are all invalid because they are baptisms without Divine authority. Any man who presumes to baptize without possessing a valid baptism himself cannot administer scriptural baptism because he lacks it himself.

So we see there is a vast difference between this “certain sect” and the other churches. Let us look at a selected quote by T.G. Jones, eminent Southern Baptist Convention pastor, vice president of the Convention, and scholar of another generation. He wrote:

“They [the Baptists] have always maintained that their churches are as ancient as Christianity itself. That their foundations were laid by no less honorable hands than those of Christ and his apostles. In all ages since the first, the Baptists have believed their denomination more ancient than themselves. The American Baptists deny that they owe their origin to Roger Williams. The English Baptists will not grant that John Smyth or Thomas Helwysse was their founder. The Welsh Baptists strenuously contend that they received their creed in the first century, from those who had obtained it, direct, from the apostles themselves. The Dutch Baptists trace their spiritual pedigree up to the same source. The German Baptists maintained that they were older than the Reformation, older than the corrupt hierarchy which it [the Reformation] sought to reform. The Waldensian Baptists boasted an ancestry far older than Waldo, older than the most ancient of their predecessors in the vales of Piedmont. So, too, may we say of the Lollards, Henricians, Paterines, Paulicians, Donatists, and other ancient Baptists, that they claim an origin more ancient than that of the men or the circumstances from which they derived their peculiar appellations. If in any instance the stream of descent is lost to human eye, in ‘the remote depths of antiquity,’ they maintain that it ultimately reappears, and reveals its source in Christ and his apostles.

Now we think that this singular unanimity of opinion among the Baptists of all countries and of all ages, respecting their common origin in apostolic and primitive times – a unanimity the existence of which might easily be established by numerous quotations from historians and other writers among them, is of itself a fact of no little value, as furnishing a presumptive argument of much force in support of the Baptist claim. In England and in the United States especially, the Baptists are now numerous, intelligent, and in every way as respectable as any denomination of Christian people. Among them are men, not only of unimpeachable moral and Christian character, but of profound learning and extensive historical research. And all these, as well as the humblest and most unlearned among them, believe that Baptists, (whether with or without the name, is a matter of indifference), have existed ‘from the days of John the Baptist until now.’” (T.G. Jones THE BAPTISTS: THEIR ORIGIN, CONTINUITY, PRINCIPLES, SPIRIT, POLITY, POSITION AND INFLUENCE. A VINDICATION. (Philadelphia, American Baptist Publication Society, n. d.) pp. 23, 24, 25 [brackets mine].

We call your attention to the fact that the book by T.G. Jones (quoted above) was not printed by Graves or his associates in the South. It was printed by the old American Baptist Publication

Society in Philadelphia! This demonstrates that the views of Jones, Graves and other “Landmarkers” was the prevalent view among mainline Baptists all over America and around the world and down through the centuries until liberalism and apostasy took over.

Sound Baptists – Churches of the New Testament sort – are the only churches in existence with a valid claim to doctrinal correctness, scriptural polity and a scriptural origin. So they are not just a “certain sect” as Mr. Zeller charges, but the true churches of Jesus Christ! Why should He not love them with a special love?

“...7. Is it only the ‘Baptist bride’ that is going to be presented to Christ faultless and spotless? Is not this the certain hope and expectancy of every child of God? Compare Jude 24-25.”

Again Mr. Zeller has jumped the fence and is violating all the common sense rules of Bible interpretation by wanting us to think that the Book of Jude was addressed to his universal, invisible “church.” IF, and I say IF, such a thing existed in Jude’s day, he did not write his little letter to it. Jude wrote his letter to a New Testament kind of Church – a real, local one with a scriptural doctrine, practice and origin. He wrote his letter to a Church that was local and could receive a real “pen and ink” letter. This Church was warned in verse 4 about **“certain men crept in unawares”** - crept in where we ask? Why, into the Churches, and Jude warns his readers that there was a danger that such men had crept into their Church. Jude wrote to a Church that had fellowship dinners and warned the Church to which he wrote about these men, saying: **“These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you...”** Mr. Zeller’s universal, invisible “church” has never had a fellowship dinner, but the kind of Church to which Jude wrote had them.

Yes, true Churches are spoken of as Christ’s bride and certain promises have been made to them that have not been given to those outside of true Churches. If that sounds “narrow” to Mr. Zeller, it is because he is too broad!

Perhaps a couple of things ought to be pointed out here. (1) The New Testament has almost nothing to say about true believers who were not scripturally baptized members of true New Testament Churches. True Churches were the only sort of churches that existed back then. That is the reason that none of them had distinguishing names. They did not need to be distinguished one from the other as all were then the same. It is true that wolves were coming in and deceivers were arising, but in that New Testament era, none dared initiate his own baptism or originate his own church as many have done today and as are often found among the “Bible Church” movement. Such things as are commonplace and accepted today were unthinkable back then. (2) None of the New Testament Epistles were addressed to persons who were outside the membership of a New Testament Church. None of them were addressed just to “believers.” If a Church is not specifically named as the recipient of the epistle, internal evidence in every epistle makes it clear that every one of them was addressed to a Church or those connected to a Church. To properly interpret these epistles, these facts must be kept in mind. Mr. Zeller fails to do this and tries to interpret them as being addressed to every believer in Christ when in fact they were addressed to Churches or persons who were members in good standing of a true Church.

“...8. When people get saved does God add them only to Landmark churches? Why are there so many true, genuine believers who are in no way associated with Landmark assemblies? Has God failed to add them to His true church?”

The verse to which Mr. Zeller refers is Acts 2:47. Again, he has an incorrect definition of the word “church” and this causes him to run amuck. Acts 2:47 says, **“the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”** This means that the Lord led believers to be scripturally baptized and joined to the New Testament kind of Church that existed in Jerusalem at that time – just as 1 Corinthians 12:13 says. Mr. Zeller has gone far astray by trying to say that this verse means that God adds people to some kind of mystical, invisible, universal “church” when they are saved. (By the way, Mr. Zeller, people do not “get saved.” You might “get” the chickenpox or the measles, but you do not “get born.” The Bible speaks of sinners asking, **“what must I do to be saved”** quite properly, in the passive voice. The sinner is the one acted upon in salvation, not the active one. A baby is involved in the birth process, but is passive and not causative and so it is in the new birth.)

But what say the commentators on this verse in Acts? Barnes, our Methodist friend, says: *“...Added or caused them to be inclined to be joined to the church. The church. To the assembly of the followers of Christ...”* Jamieson, Faussett and Brown, John Gill, Matthew Henry and even John Calvin all say this verse means those who were regenerated were led to join the Jerusalem Church.

God still leads His people to be joined to New Testament Churches, but in this day of apostasy and deception many professing to be the Lord’s people are led astray into counterfeit churches, at least for a time. Thus you may find genuinely saved people in many different kinds of churches other than the New Testament sort. This condition was anticipated by the Holy Spirit when He inspired the Bible and thus that Book contains warnings regarding the necessity of sound doctrine and practice as well as the call in Revelation 18:4 to come out of those false churches.

“...9.” (Referring to Matthew 16:18). *“Was this a promise to build Landmark Baptist assemblies? Does this mean that only Landmark Baptists escape the gates of Hades?”*

After these questions, in brackets, Mr. Zeller goes off into a most interesting and novel interpretation of what the phrase “the gates of hell” means. Space does not permit me to deal fully with his eccentric idea here, but let it be sufficient to say that “the gates of hell” refers to the governments of the unseen spirit world. “Gates” in the Old Testament were the seats of city government – the place where the local leaders met for various purposes. There is ample testimony to this in the Old Testament pages of your Bible.

Barnes, our Methodist commentator rightly says:

“And the gates of hell, etc. Ancient cities were surrounded by walls. In the gates, by which they were entered, were the principal places for holding courts, transacting business, and deliberating on public matters. See Barnes "Mt 7:13". The word gates, therefore, is used for counsels, designs, machinations, evil purposes. Hell means, here, the place of departed spirits, particularly evil spirits. And the meaning of the passage is, that all the plots, stratagems, and machinations, of the enemies of the church, should not be able to overcome it—a promise that has been remarkably fulfilled.”

But Mr. Zeller does it again. He changes horses in the midst of the stream! The promise of the Lord was that the gates of hell (whatever you understand that phrase to mean) would not prevail against the Church that He would complete building. Mr. Zeller, failing to follow sound, common sense rules of interpretation changes the word “church” into “believers” and says the promise is to all believers and that no one since Pentecost has gone to hell upon death. (He uses the word “hades” to mean the abode of the dead.) Aside from his novel idea about the “gates of hades,” the important thing to note is that Mr. Zeller has again jumped the fence and changed the plain meaning of Scripture by changing the word “church” into “believers” in his thinking and writing. This is misinterpretation of the Bible. How can this man think to arrive at truth if he consistently changes Bible words?

As we pointed out earlier in this article, Jesus’ promise was that He would complete building His “church” and the gates of hell would not prevail against it. Sound Baptists insist that Jesus did indeed build His true New Testament kind of Church and that through both evangelism and church-planting of the New Testament kind successive Churches of the same New Testament sort have existed and do presently exist in various parts of the world.

“...10.” Citing 1 Corinthians 10:32 which says: **“Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God,”** Mr. Zeller asks: *“Does this mean that we are to be careful not to be a stumblingblock to unsaved Gentiles, unsaved Jews and Landmark Baptists? Does this mean that it does not matter whether we are a stumblingblock to non-Landmark brethren who are truly saved?”*

Obviously the phrase “church of God” in this passage is one of those used generically or in a way so as to deal with the idea of a church. We have pointed out that the real thing – real Churches are found to be “local” assemblies gathered and organized according to the New Testament pattern.

Again Mr. Zeller fails in his use of common sense rules of Bible interpretation. He would have us believe that it is possible to be a stumbling block to saved people who have died and are in the presence of the Lord for according to him they are part of his universal, invisible church.

We must also be careful not to be a stumbling block to the elect children of God who have not yet been born physically, for they, too, are part of his church, since all the saved of this church age are included in his “church.” That is, of course, if Paul was writing in 1 Cor. 10:32 about Mr. Zeller’s kind of invisible “church.”

When Paul wrote the above-mentioned verse, there was only one kind of Church. There were no false churches such as have proliferated in this age of apostasy (2 Thessalonians 2:3) and there was no universal, invisible “church” as Mr. Zeller teaches. As we have shown, believers were members of true New Testament Churches, for no other kind then existed. Paul simply instructs the New Testament Church of Corinth to give no offense to anyone – Jew, Gentile or members of New Testament Churches. Who else was there in the world? What Paul means is to consider the culture, beliefs and practices of each of these groups and live so as not to deliberately offend them. Do not go to the home of a Jew eating a ham sandwich! Do not go to the home of a pagan Gentile and demand kosher food! Do not flaunt your Christian liberty to weak members of a Church and cause them to stumble. These are the kinds of things Paul had in mind.

Conclusion to this Section

Again we point out that the New Testament has little to say about and practically nothing to say to true believers who exist outside of true New Testament Churches. Mr. Zeller is confused and confuses the issues with which he deals because he does not pay strict attention to not only what is written, but also to who wrote it, to whom it was written, when it was written, and under what circumstances. He pays no attention to either the immediate context or the larger context of the whole Bible. He is not diligent to stick to the original words used and their ordinary meanings as well as any special or technical meanings that may have been ascribed to them by the writer. He fails in observing logical, common sense rules of understanding the Bible. And so he is confused on almost every issue. Every candid reader will agree to these statements, I believe.

“5) The Error which Insists that the True Churches are Linked to John the Baptist (the Successionist Theory).

We have already stated that sound Baptists do not think that John the Baptist founded any kind of church. We have already proved that with the ministry of John the Baptist came the end of the Old Testament law system or age. We have shown that the gospel began with John the Baptist, was continued by Jesus Christ and His apostles and New Testament preachers. (See our presentation of the origin and continuance of the gospel under Mr. Zeller’s 3rd point above.) We believe the Bible is clear that the first true church was gathered by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself

during the ministry of John the Baptist. His first members had been baptized by John in preparation for the coming of Christ.

Mr. Zeller insists that John the Baptist was under the Old Testament dispensation. We have shown that the Bible says that **“the law and the prophets were until John and since that time the kingdom of God is preached”** (Luke 16:16). Honesty would demand that Mr. Zeller deal with this passage, but he has not and cannot deal honestly with it. All he can do is try to explain it away. But it cannot be explained away to the satisfaction of honest-hearted children of God. It must be believed!

Mr. Zeller Mixes Law and Grace

Next Mr. Zeller insists that the Landmark view mixes law and grace. It does not. It is Mr. Zeller's view that has John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus operating under the law dispensation. It is Mr. Zeller's view that has the New Testament Church left without both ordinances (baptism and the Lord's Supper) and without a Great Commission because all three of these great institutions were begun, according to Mr. Zeller, under the Old Testament system or age of the law. Who is mixing law and grace, as Mr. Zeller accuses: those who say that the law system ended with John and the Church started during the ministry of Christ, and that He, during that ministry, under grace, instituted both ordinances and then commissioned His Church? Or is it that law and grace are confused and mixed by those who say that the true Church started on Pentecost and must get Her ordinances and commission by going back into the Old Testament Law dispensation? We think the answer is clear.

Jesus Said He Preached Grace

What does the Lord Jesus Christ say about His own ministry? Did He indicate that He initiated something new and different? Or, is Mr. Zeller right in consigning the Lord Jesus Christ to the age of the Law? In Luke 4:16-21 we have a most interesting light shed on the ministry of Christ by the Savior Himself. There we read: **“And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them,**

This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” If you read carefully Isaiah 61:1-3 where this prophecy is originally recorded and you notice where the Lord Jesus stopped reading that Sabbath day in Nazareth, you will notice that He stopped just short of **“and the day of vengeance of our God...”** This last quoted phrase refers to the period of the great tribulation in which the wrath of God will begin to be poured out. The meaning of the Lord was clear to his hearers and is clear to us today. The Lord is teaching that He is introducing, by His preaching, the age of grace – i.e. the **“acceptable year of the Lord.”** He means by this the age of God’s favor – the age in which men can find favor with God. Christ does not mean a literal year, but an indefinite time period that we call the age of grace or the gospel age, called by some the “church age.” He made it clear that this Scripture was fulfilled at that time – **“in your ears”** - or in your experience, your day. But Mr. Zeller says that the **“acceptable year of the Lord”** did not begin until Pentecost! Mr. Zeller contradicts what the Lord Jesus Christ said!

Grace and Truth Came By Jesus Christ

The Bible says, **“For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ”** (John 1:17). This verse contrasts the Old Testament law system with the ministry of Jesus Christ. This verse would have us believe that grace and truth supplanted that system initiated by Moses. The types and shadows were fulfilled and replaced by reality! Simple, isn’t it? But Mr. Zeller insists that the age of grace and truth did not begin until Pentecost and that this new age was initiated by the Holy Spirit and not by Christ at all. Again, it is seen that Mr. Zeller’s artificial dispensational scheme does not agree with the Bible. Of course, if he admitted that the Bible is right he would have to admit that sound Baptists are right and it would be expected that he would become one after having been scripturally baptized.

The Gospels Began with John the Baptist

Furthermore, the gospels began with John the Baptist. In fact if you will read Mark 1:1 you will see that **“The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ...”** are the first words of Mark’s Gospel. These words are followed by seven verses that tell of the character and ministry of John the Baptist! Significant, isn’t it! After his four-verse introduction in the Classical Greek language that deals with the person addressed, Luke begins his Gospel with 75 verses relating to the events surrounding the birth of John the Baptist! More than significant, isn’t it! And John in the first chapter of his Gospel records 21 verses that pertain to John the Baptist. Combined, that makes 103 verses that deal specifically about John the Baptist out of the beginning chapters of three of the Gospels! It has been well put that there are more verses about John the Baptist in your Bible than there are verses in any of the five smaller books of the New Testament. We do a serious harm to our understanding of the Bible when we do as Mr. Zeller would have us do, and that is to relegate John the Baptist to some forgotten nook in the law dispensation.

Who Really Mixes Law and Grace

So who is it that is confusing law and grace? Is it Mr. Zeller whose view is challenged by the Word of God when it says the law ended with John the Baptist and that the age of grace began with the preaching of Jesus Christ? Or is it the simple view that says, as Jesus said, the law dispensation ended with John the Baptist? The Landmark view is simple, scriptural and easily understood. It is black and white in its distinctions. It is difficult only to those who have been trained in interdenominationalism or hyper-dispensationalism and who must, therefore, learn the true Bible definitions of certain words and become acquainted with the teaching of certain verses universally ignored by those who hold to the Protestant Interdenominational view.

Your Church Family Tree

Mr. Zeller, your church family tree does not go back to John the Baptist. Nobody's church family tree does. However, sound Baptists have a baptism that goes back to John the Baptist, the only man God ever sent to initiate baptism. I call your attention to these verses which prove this point: **"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John"** (John 1:6). **"And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost"** (John 1:33). John was a God-sent man – sent in a unique way. God sent him to initiate baptism. John is the only man who was sent to initiate baptism as far as it has been revealed to us in the Bible.

Yes, there are many saved men who have not been Spirit-baptized into the universal, invisible body of Christ since the Spirit baptizes no one and the universal, invisible "body" does not exist. On the day of Pentecost, Jesus baptized His waiting Church in or with the Holy Spirit, giving them power and visible signs manifesting that power. This was in fulfillment of John the Baptist's prophecy which said: **"I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost"** (Mark 1:8). To twist this and other verses which say the same thing into something done by the Holy Spirit when the plain words say "he" (Christ) shall baptize you is a grievous error.

A Most Preposterous Idea

Mr. Zeller advances a most preposterous idea. He says, *"John's baptism was not sufficient for the new dispensation. They had to be baptized in the name of Christ. There is a distinct difference between Christian baptism and John's baptism."* He manifests an ignoring of the context and the nature of the events recorded in the account of Paul's "re-baptism" of the 12 men in Ephesus but we have insufficient space to enter into that discussion here.

We would raise some questions here. If John's baptism was not sufficient for the age of grace, we would ask when was Jesus re-baptized with this new "Christian baptism" and who baptized Him? Are we to believe that Christ lacked "Christian baptism?" Christ is our Example and we are to follow Him. As He had John's baptism, so have I. Show me where Jesus was re-baptized with your "Christian baptism" and I will follow my Divine Example in this.

If a man baptized by a Baptist has Baptist baptism, then according to Mr. Zeller, the Lord Jesus Christ had Baptist baptism. I don't think Mr. Zeller wants to go there!

We would also ask when were the apostles baptized with this new "Christian baptism" seeing they had only what he calls "John's baptism?" Who instituted such a new "Christian baptism" and when did it occur the first time? When were the apostles re-baptized with this "Christian baptism?" Since a man must have a valid baptism to administer it according to the New Testament pattern – unless he has direct authority from God as John had – what man was sent directly from God to initiate this new baptism? Who was the first to receive it? If John's baptism was invalid after the day of Pentecost, are we to believe that un-baptized men (the apostles) could originate a new baptism and it be valid in Heaven's eyes? Why is the New Testament silent on any details or even any hints about such a new, "Christian baptism?" Perhaps we must have "Holy Ghost vision" or "doves' eyes" so as to be able to "read between the lines" in order to read about this new "Christian baptism." Nothing about "Christian baptism" is to be found in the Bible whatsoever! It is a contrived idea necessary only to Mr. Zeller's Protestant interdenominationalist soup of doctrines.

The Bible says **"When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)..."** thus indicating that when Jesus was fulfilling His earthly ministry He was credited with baptizing. However, when He was preparing His disciples – His Church – for His departure, He instructed them to make converts, baptize them, and teach them. This is the essence of the Great Commission. Thus they were to baptize in the name of the Trinity. In Acts we find the preachers baptizing "in Jesus name," "in the name of the Lord Jesus," and "in the name of the Lord." Were the early Christian preachers disobedient to the Lord's commission? No they were not! To baptize "in Jesus name" or any of the variants listed or in the names of the Trinity is not just to recite mere words saying that is what you are doing. It means to baptize with Divine authority. We understand what it is to have a "power of attorney" and act "in the name" of someone else. After His departure, no longer could it be said that **"Jesus baptized,"** but it would be necessary, if scriptural baptism were to continue, that the Churches would have authority delegated to them to baptize – the authority of the Son of God – for they had not had that authority before.

John the Baptist Not In the Kingdom

Mr. Zeller cites Matthew 11:11 to prove that John was not in the kingdom. We agree with that statement, but we disagree with Mr. Zeller's definition as to what the kingdom is. We think

he is confused as to the distinctions between the family of God, the kingdom of God and the Church of God. This writer, along with at least some Baptists of bygone days, believes that the present kingdom can be defined as the aggregate of the true Churches of Jesus Christ. With that definition in mind, we would agree that John the Baptist was not in the kingdom. To be in the kingdom, you must be a member of a true Church. To be a member of a true Church you must have scriptural baptism. John the Baptist was never baptized, therefore could not be a member of any New Testament Church and so is not in the kingdom.

John indicated this position of his early on in his ministry. In John 3:29 he said: **“He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.”** By these words he indicated that he was not the bridegroom and also that he had no part in the bride of Christ. He also indicated that Christ at that time had a bride! We might say John the Baptist was the “best man.” So here we have one man, at least, that was regenerated, filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb, God-ordained to preach and to baptize, greater than a prophet, the initiator of the gospel, etc., who is not a part of the bride of Christ! In light of these things, how can anyone think that regeneration puts a person in the bride of Christ? If John was regenerated (saved) and in this new age that began with him and yet not a part of the bride of Christ, why should we have a problem with the idea that there are other saved people in this age who are not a part of the bride of Christ?

By the way, perhaps we should point out another of Mr. Zeller’s inconsistencies. Christ had a bride while He was in the flesh according to John 3:29, and we have no problem with this, but Mr. Zeller does for he thinks John and Christ were in the Old Testament Age of the Law, and yet Christ had a bride whom Mr. Zeller says is the “church.” So Mr. Zeller has his bride or his “church” existing before Pentecost and yet Pentecost is the day Mr. Zeller says the “church” was born. Confused, isn’t he?

Further to this point, we find that the bride of Christ in a prospective sense will inhabit the New Jerusalem and that the Gentiles will come in and out of the city. And we are told that nothing can enter the city that defiles, so these must be saved Gentiles. But they are separate from the bride. Makes sense, does it not – it is usual at a wedding that there are more guests than there are brides.

Conclusion to this Section

Yes, the founder of the true New Testament Churches was Jesus Christ, not John the Baptist and NOT the Holy Spirit as Mr. Zeller would have us believe. Christ must have first place, and the Landmark view sets forth the truth that Jesus did keep His word – He did build His kind of New Testament Church. But it is clear that Mr. Zeller and his views give first place to the Holy Spirit who, they teach, in one day, the day of Pentecost, did what Jesus failed to do, though He tried for three-and-one-half years. Furthermore, in this section we have pointed out the confused state Mr.

Zeller's doctrines are in and some of his inconsistencies. Surely every thinking person will see his errors.

“6) The Error of Believer's Baptism Not being Recognized as Legitimate unless it is Performed by one of their Men in one of their Churches.”

Protestant Succession of Invalid Baptisms

As we have shown before, Protestants have no valid baptism. They have no valid baptism because the baptism they have to give is either from the Harlot directly, or one of her Daughters, and Harlot baptism cannot be recognized as scriptural baptism. That baptism has been passed down to the present day in succession among them. It is the only baptism they have. Old Tertullian (A.D. 160 – 230) said it well, *“Doubtless they who are not baptized aright are not baptized at all.”*

Four Requirements for Valid Baptism

There are four requirements for scriptural baptism – that is for a baptism to be valid in the eyes of Heaven, for these requirements are Heaven given as seen in the teachings and pattern of the New Testament. First of all scriptural baptism must have a scriptural candidate – i.e. a sinner giving evidence of repentance and professing faith in Jesus Christ. Secondly, scriptural baptism requires a scriptural mode – i.e. immersion in water. Thirdly, for a baptism to be valid it must have a scriptural motive – i.e. to show forth the believer's identity with the death, burial and resurrection with Jesus Christ. Baptism administered as a sacrament to wash away sins is not a scriptural or valid baptism. And fourthly, for a baptism to be valid, it must have a scriptural administrator.

This last point is generally the sticking point with Protestants because if they admit to this requirement, they un-baptize themselves – i.e. they must admit that they are themselves yet un-baptized. This is further complicated if “they” claim to be a minister of Christ, for all whom they have put under the water are yet un-baptized also. Pride often enters in and will not allow a man to admit he has been wrong on such a fundamental thing as baptism! A vested interest also often enters in, for to admit such a thing usually means that if he admits such a thing, a minister will lose his “church” and his salary – and perhaps his annuity.

Here are the facts: Christ commissioned His kind of Church to evangelize, baptize and teach obedience to all the things He had commanded them. Now according to Mr. Zeller's view,

the “church” commissioned by Christ could not be the universal, invisible “body” for it did not yet exist and would not until the day of Pentecost. Just who or what did Christ commission, Mr. Zeller?

The Commission Given But to Whom

The student of the Word must decide in what capacity those gathered were commissioned. (We think above 500 brethren were gathered when the Lord gave the commission to His church that consisted of 11 men. Compare Matthew 28:10 with 1 Corinthians 15:6.) Did Christ commission these 11 believers as baptized individuals? If so, then every baptized believer has the right and obligation (for this is a duty as well as a privilege) to carry out the Great Commission, including the right and duty to baptize. This would include women and the youngest of baptized believers, whether they are well taught in the Word or not. And this would mean that when that company of baptized believers died, the Commission would die with them for the Commission was given to them as individuals as a delegated responsibility. Delegated responsibilities cannot be delegated.

Well, the Catholic party says that the Great Commission was given to the apostles as apostles. But the same problem exists for the Bible student who might try to espouse this view. Unless you can convince yourself that apostles still exist and that they can produce the signs of an apostle, you must believe that the apostolate ended with the death of John the apostle, the last living one. So with either this view or the preceding one, it must be admitted that the Great Commission ended about A.D. 100. With the end of the Great Commission came the end of valid baptism if that is the case.

Only if we understand that the Great Commission was given to the Lord’s Church – a real, functioning, “local” New Testament kind of Church – do we still have a valid Commission and thus valid baptism because the Lord’s kind of Churches still exist, one in succession to another down through the centuries. Churches which have no valid claim to a scriptural doctrine and practice as well as a succession to the Church Jesus built have no commission for they are a different species than that which Jesus commissioned. The New Testament gives us 11 marks by which we can recognize a true, New Testament kind of Church. For the sake of brevity and in order to stay on the subject of a New Testament kind of Church we insert the following from my booklet, “Eleven Marks of a New Testament Church.” We will only deal with the first mark.

“In the New Testament we find certain characteristics or marks that are essential to all churches of the New Testament kind. A New Testament kind of church is the kind Jesus started. It is the kind He promised a continual existence. It is the kind He is pleased with today. It is His church. We believe it is the only kind of church that is acceptable to God. If we would find churches of the New Testament kind, we must look for those essential marks or characteristics

which we find in the New Testament. Others have done this and some have left helpful information behind. For instance, some years ago a Southern Baptist Convention pastor, J.M Carroll, presented lectures in different places in the United States on the subject of Baptist history. His lectures were extremely popular among the Baptists, many of whom were ignorant of their own history. After his death his lecture notes were put in book form. We quote from the introduction to Bro. Carroll's little book, THE TRAIL OF BLOOD. (This little book has been translated into Romanian and is available free. If you wish to obtain this little book, contact the address printed on this booklet.) In the introduction to THE TRAIL OF BLOOD, Baptist pastor Clarence Walker wrote:

'In any town there are many different churches -- all claiming to be the true church. Dr. Carroll did as you can do now -- take the marks, or teachings, of the different churches and find the ones which have these marks, or doctrines. The ones which have these marks, or doctrines, taught in God's Word, are the true churches.'

It is clear that Jesus cannot be the founder of all the different "churches." They have origins different from the church Jesus founded. They have different doctrines and different practices from the church Jesus founded. They have different doctrines and different practices from each other. He founded His kind of church because He wanted it to be a specific kind of church. He wanted it to have certain characteristics. Since God alone knows best what will please Him, it is logical that only the kind of church Christ founded can please Him. It is important that the reader keep this last statement in mind. God knows what pleases Him better than we do. Christ founded the kind of church He wanted. Men may think they know better than Christ and so they may make changes in Christ's churches or they may start their own kind of church, but Christ's churches are the kind He started. These are the kind of churches that please Him.

A few words about the importance of the churches are in order here. Just as the whole Bible is Christ centered, the whole New Testament has a second emphasis and that is the churches. The four Gospels tell us of the ministry of Christ and include His work in building His first church. The Book of Acts records how that one church evangelized and many were born from her through ordained men. The Epistles were mostly written to individual churches or groups of churches dealing with doctrinal and practical issues within the churches. Those New Testament books addressed to individuals were written to men who labored in the churches and in establishing new ones. The Book of Revelation has in it seven letters from Christ addressed to seven individual churches and the rest of the book deals with events, most of which take place prior to Christ returning to the earth to reign with His bride. So the New Testament certainly gives great importance to Christ's kind of New Testament churches! The words were addressed to members of churches - true churches – churches of the kind Jesus founded.

Christ is said to have a special love for His church (Eph. 5:25). She is so important to Him as to be pictured as His bride (John 3:29) and to her as the bride of Christ is given the work of evangelism in connection with the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:18-20; Rev. 22:17). Today, many would

try to live for Christ, worship and serve God outside of Christ's kind of churches. Because of the importance of Christ's churches, as the New Testament evidences, we doubt whether such worship and service is acceptable to God and to Christ. After all, it is in the church that God is glorified through Christ Jesus (Eph. 3:21). Man made organizations glorify the man that founded them, often bearing his name. Only in true churches of Christ is the Lord Jesus Christ glorified. What true believer, taught in the Word, would try to please God outside of a God-approved church?

Jesus said, **"I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"** (Matt. 16:18). Jesus also promised that His presence would be with His Churches even down to the end of the age (Matt. 28:20). Because of these promises of Christ we can expect to find true New Testament Churches in existence somewhere in the world in our own time. They may not be in every city or even in every country and you may not have found them, but they exist.

If we would find the Lord's Churches we must not judge them according to our own ideas and preferences (Isa. 55:9). We must judge them according to the Word of God. They are not to be known by some special name, for anyone can use a name and claim that name makes them special. They are not to be known by temporary, external signs, but by those things which are essential and perpetual. They are not necessarily the churches of Christ because of their great size, popularity, prestige, or political influence. False churches are often the most popular and influential. It has always been true that God's people are a small number (Luke 12:32; Rom. 11:5; Isa. 1:9; John 6:65-67). God's remnant has never been influential in the eyes of the world or the world's religions. If God has given you eyes to see the truth about His remnant, you may be well on the way to locating true New Testament churches. If your eyes are enthralled by size and worldly prestige, you are deceived already. Just because some group at the present time has the "advantage" does not make them Christ's churches (see Jude verse 16).

Even in the days of the apostles some men left the truth (Acts 15:24; 1 John 2:19). They formed their own kind of "churches" with their "disciples" (Acts 20:30). Some of these, along with other defectors from the truth, gradually became the Catholic group. This group later split into the eastern and western branches. Later in history the Protestant Reformation occurred. At that time several men founded churches according to their own beliefs. They had their own ideas and preferences. They had many beliefs and practices that were identical to the Harlot. All of them believed in baptismal regeneration. They all practiced infant baptism for salvation. They brought this idea, and others, along with them when they were excluded from the Harlot church. These men did not follow the Bible regardless of what you may have heard. Neither did their churches. Neither do their churches follow the Bible today. They all teach and practice the soul-damning doctrine of baptismal regeneration. They "baptize" infants – admittedly without Scriptural instruction or example. The churches these "reformers" founded were their own and not Christ's churches. These Protestant churches which exist today cannot be Christ's churches because they (1) were founded by some man other than Jesus Christ and (2) preach a false gospel (see 2 Cor. 11:4 and Gal. 1:6), have different officers, different governments, etc., etc. Today's more recent man-made churches are not the churches of Christ because they came out of these Protestant daughters of the Harlot. It is impossible to bring a clean thing out of an unclean thing (Job 14:4). Because of this impossibility a "reformation" of the Harlot (making an unclean thing clean) was not and is not possible! A genuine reformation did not take place for the filth of the

false gospel of the Harlot still clings to the man-made churches which came out of her. Not only was and is a reformation impossible, none was needed! Christ had His churches on the earth so that it was not necessary to clean up (reform) the Harlot to make her Christ's church. So we conclude that the "Protestant Reformation" accomplished no real good. It did produce some "churches" with less detestible doctrines and practices in the opinion of the world, but they are still the daughters of the harlot and are themselves harlots according to the Bible. (Rev. 17:5). The famous "Protestant Reformation" only produced more false churches – it did not produce Christ's kind of New Testament churches. Any student of history will verify this for they know that the churches of the "Protestant Reformation" do not bear the marks of the churches of the New Testament.

In his book Bro. Carroll listed eleven marks or characteristics of true New Testament Churches. These are Scriptural marks. These are essential marks. Christ's churches have borne these marks down through the centuries since He established the first one. The true churches of Christ bear these marks today. We are convinced that in our time this kind of church is to be found among the people called Baptists. This is because of the (1) origin of the Baptists and (2) the doctrine and practice of mainline Baptists down through the centuries. We are convinced that some Baptist churches bear these eleven essential marks of New Testament churches. We are equally convinced that not all "Baptist churches" are true New Testament Churches. Any group can call themselves a "church." Any "church" can call herself "Baptist." Unless a church bears the essential marks of a New Testament Church they are not a true Church of Christ regardless of their name. Consider these eleven Scriptural marks of New Testament Churches and may God guide you in finding true New Testament churches – Christ's churches!

THE FIRST MARK OF A TRUE CHURCH: *"The Head and Founder of New Testament Churches is CHRIST. He is the only lawgiver. The church is only the executive (Matt. 16:18; Col. 1:18)."*

It is not enough just to say that Christ is the Head of a church! He must actually be the Head! He must direct the activities and work of the church. If Christ is not the Head of a church, He is only a figurehead. If Christ is not the Head of a church, He has no real part in that church. In order to be the Head of a church, Christ's Word, the Bible, must be obeyed. If we would follow Christ, we cannot omit any part of the Lord's instructions to us, nor can we add to them.

There are two errors into which men fall relative to the Headship of Christ over each church. Some would substitute a pope. They may not call him or her a pope. They may call him or her a pastor or a teacher or a prophet. It does not matter what he or she is called, if his ideas are followed instead of the instructions of Christ, he is a pope. Many "churches" today follow the teachings of some long-dead "pope" and are loyal to his interpretations of the Bible or to his additional "revelations" than they are to the simple words of the Bible. The second error is tradition and this error is more subtle. Traditions - Baptist traditions or traditions of the Harlot and her Protestant daughters – it does not matter the source. They all result in false worship. They are the commandments of men and are not according to truth (Matt 15:19). True worship must be not

only a spiritual matter, it must be – it absolutely MUST be according to truth (John 4:23-24). The Bible has nothing good to say about religious traditions. In His entire ministry Jesus had nothing good to say about religious traditions! Jesus and His disciples did not conform to the religious traditions of His day (see Mark 7:1-7; Matt. 12:1-7). If we would be Christ's churches, we must have nothing good to say about religious traditions. Since there is nothing good about them we must not follow them! Just as Jesus and His first church rejected the religious traditions of their day, so must we reject the religious traditions of our day. This is part of going outside the camp and bearing His reproach (Heb. 13:13).

The origin of religious traditions can universally be traced to paganism and idolatry. If the Bible is clear on anything, it is this: Christ's church, His bride, is to be pure from idolatry (1 Cor. 10:14, 21; 1 John 5:21). Neither are the Lord's churches to be involved in Jewish observances and holy days (Gal. 4:9-11; Titus 1:14). Most certainly Christ's churches are not to participate in the pagan holidays that are popular with the world and the false churches of the world.

One thing is absolutely clear. A church that is ruled by anyone or anything other than Christ and His Word is not a New Testament kind of church. It is something else. Whether pope or tradition, anything or anyone that is followed other than Christ becomes the head of a church. Such a replacement means that the church has become another kind of church. It is not Christ's church for He is not the Head of it. He did not build that kind of church. He is not present in her meetings for she lacks His authority.

Christ gave to His churches certain rights or authority. He did not give them unlimited authority, but specific authority. This authority relates to the job He gave the churches to do while He is away. The first kind of authority Christ gave to His churches is judicial authority: by that we mean the authority to judge. Churches have only limited judicial power (1 Cor. 5:12-13). By following the democratic process (voting), the members of each church have the right to determine (judge) who is qualified for membership. In the same manner (voting) the members of each church have the right to determine who is to be excluded from the fellowship of the church (1 Cor. 5:9-13, note especially verse 12). Such action must be based, of course, on Christ's teachings concerning this matter (Matt. 18:15-17). This they must act according to the Word of God if they would be Christ's kind of church. They are equally responsible to treat those excluded members according to the New Testament (Matt. 18:17; 2 Thess. 3:15). The Bible does not teach shunning of excluded members. They are to actively seek the restoration of excluded members to full fellowship with the Church (Matt. 18:17, 2 Cor. 2:7). Based on the Bible and the Bible alone, churches have the authority to judge a man's preaching as to whether it is truth or not (1 Cor. 14:29; 1 John 4:1). So you see, a church has only limited judicial authority.

The second kind of authority Christ gave to His churches is executive power. This executive power is unlimited so that we can say that true Churches are executive in nature. By that we mean they are responsible to carry out the instructions of Christ who is to be the Head of each church (Luke 6:46). There is no limitation in this matter. There is no acceptable excuse for a church not carrying out the instructions of Christ. Churches are to obey Christ's instructions to them. They are to carry out His commandments and follow His example (Matt 28:18; 1 John 2:6).

This is the reason Christ left His kind of churches on earth, that they might do exactly what He wants them to do.

There is a third kind of power and that is legislative power. Churches do not have legislative power! Christ did not give them legislative power. We mean they do not have authority to make rules and regulations. Christ is the lawgiver! They cannot change the rules, instructions and commandments given by Christ. They have no right to change the ordinances or any of the teachings of the Bible. They have no right to change the Scriptural practices of the churches, or to make innovations in the worship of God. In their evangelism they must use only the methods of the New Testament, that is, the methods Christ and His apostles used. They have no authority to make innovations or to follow the inventions of men.

Christ established a church just as He promised He would do (Matt. 16:18). If He did not He is a liar at worst or a failure at best. (There is no Scripture that teaches that the church or anything else was founded on “Pentecost.”) Christ built His church from material prepared by John the Baptist. From the first church that Christ established during His earthly ministry all true churches have descended. The New Testament pattern of church succession is this: baptized, ordained men who were acting in connection with an already-existing church traveled and evangelized, baptized converts and organized them into churches. This is clear from the Book of Acts. It is in this way that Christ’s kind of churches have continued existence. Such a continuance of New Testament churches is not apostolic succession, ministerial succession, nor merely baptismal succession. New Testament churches start other New Testament churches through men whom they send forth to do this work. This is the New Testament pattern.

A church established in connection with anyone other than Jesus Christ is not His. A church that does not obey the New Testament certainly does not have Christ for her head. A church without Christ as her head is not a New Testament kind of church. Christ is both the Head and Founder of His New Testament kind of churches.” (end of quote.)

Conclusion to this Section

Further we would point out that in every instance of valid baptism in the New Testament certain things were true. (1) The person doing the baptizing was a man. (2) The man doing the baptizing was a man who had been scripturally baptized – his baptism met the four requirements listed above. (3) The man doing the baptizing was an ordained man – ordained by a true New Testament kind of Church – he was recognized and set apart for special ministry. (3) The man doing the baptizing was a member in good standing of a previously existing New Testament kind of Church. He was not a freelancer. Anyone “baptized” by someone lacking even one of these qualifications has a baptism different that that practiced and accepted as valid by the Churches of the New Testament era.

“7). The Error of ‘Closed Communion’ which Involves not Allowing True, Genuine, Obedient Believers to Partake of Communion merely because they are not Members of a Landmark Assembly.”

Churches Have No Right to Change Christ’s Rules

First of all, it is the Lord’s Table, or the Lord’s Supper, and not ours. As we have pointed out, Churches have no legislative power. True Churches have limited judicial power, but possess exclusive executive power to carry out the instructions of the Head of the Church. (I use the word “church” in the ideological sense speaking of the concept of Headship, knowing that Christ is indeed the Head over each of His true Churches.) Because Churches have no legislative power, they cannot make the rules as to who partakes together of the Lord’s Supper. So we “Landmarkers” cannot change what the Bible teaches on this matter, regardless of how inclusive we might want to be.

Closed Communion is a Historic Baptist Practice

No evidence exists that suggests that “closed communion” originated with J.R. Graves or in his days. Closed communion is much older than that as can be demonstrated in Baptist history. Pedit-baptists (baby-baptizers) have written against the Baptists many times down through the centuries because of their closed table.

Closed Communion is Consistent

Down through the centuries many pedit-baptists have recognized that the Baptists are at least consistent in their practice of closed communion. There are, after all, certain persons who are barred from the Lord’s table. The Scriptures nowhere allow that an un-baptized person has a right to the Lord’s table. Baptists are consistent by not allowing those whom they regard as un-

baptized to partake of the Lord's table. Mr. Zeller's problem really is this: New Testament Baptists – Landmarkers, if you please, do not regard Catholic administrations, Protestant administrations or man-made administrations as valid administrations. We do not accept their churches as true Churches. We do not accept their ministers as true ministers of Jesus Christ. So we are consistent. We do not allow those whom we regard as un-baptized to participate in the Lord's Supper. In following this policy we make no judgment as to the salvation or piety of any person. We simply are consistent.

Baptist elder T. P. Simmons in his book, A SYSTEMATIC STUDY OF BIBLE DOCTRINE, lists 5 reasons Baptists practice close communion. We believe they are adequate arguments for closed communion and so we give them as follows:

Closed Communion Vindicated

“1. Because Christ instituted close communion. When Christ instituted the Supper, only the eleven apostles were present with Him, Judas having already gone out. He did not have His mother there. Neither did He have others of His followers in Jerusalem there. He did not, so far as we have any record, invite the man in whose house the supper was instituted. Why? Because the supper was for none but His church. Hence, since Baptists do not regard others as members of Christ's church, they do not invite them to the supper.

2. Because the scriptural order observed in Pentecost and thereafter leads to close communion. The order on Pentecost and thereafter was (1) faith; (2) baptism; (3) church membership; and (4) the Lord's Supper. See Acts 2:41, 42. This is exactly the order insisted on by Baptists. They do not deny that others may have faith, but they do deny that they have received valid baptism and that they are members of a church of Christ.

3. Because the interest of scriptural church discipline demand the practice of close communion. In Rom. 16:17 and 1 Tim. 6:3-5 we have implied ground for excusive discipline in the case of persistent teachers of doctrinal error. The need of unity in the church also makes excusive discipline necessary in the case just mentioned.

Now suppose a church finds it necessary to exclude a false teacher. If the church practices open communion, this false teacher can still commune with the church, notwithstanding the fact that partaking of the Lord's Supper is one of the most intimate and sacred privileges of church

membership. Allowing such would go a long way toward nullifying church discipline. It would involve the church in glaring inconsistency. If one is not fit to be in the church, he is not fit to partake of the Lord's Supper.

4. Because it is impossible to observe the Lord's Supper by open communion. A church may eat unleavened bread and sip wine with a group in which divisions are present, but Paul plainly says that "it is not possible to eat the Lord's Supper" under such circumstances. See 1 Cor. 11:19-20 in R.V.

5. Because the Lord's Supper is a local church ordinance. The meaning of this statement is that it is to be observed by the members of one local church. Not all Baptists recognize this. But it is recognized by most of the stricter Baptists. And where it is recognized, it becomes the most conclusive proof of close communion.

In proof of this proposition two proofs are offered:

- (1) The one loaf in the supper symbolizes the unity of the one body... Now for others, than the members of the church observing the supper, to partake is incongruous with this symbolism.*
- (2) There are certain classes that a church is commanded not to eat with. See 1 Cor. 5:11. When a church invites those outside its membership to partake of the supper, it is boldly disregarding this injunction; for it cannot know that some of those invited are not of the classes mentioned in 1 Cor. 5:11."*

Conclusion to this Section

Again and again we have seen Mr. Zeller either deliberately or ignorantly confuse those things written to and about real, local Churches of Jesus Christ with his imaginary, universal, invisible, mystical "church" that never meets, never held a communion service, never disciplined a member, never ordained a man for special service, never held a business meeting, never worshipped or served in any way. Paul gave instructions regarding the Supper with the words, **"ye come together"** six times in 1 Corinthians chapter 14. Obviously his teaching was that they were to come together as a Church for observing the Supper. His words cannot be conceived to be directed to free-lance "Christians" or itinerate believers or rogue preachers that refuse to submit to Christ's authority as delegated to His Churches. We just cannot conceive of the idea that a church coming out of the Harlot or a church founded by some man are equal to the Church that Jesus built and so we reject their administrations.

“8). The Error which Identifies the Bride of Christ as being composed only of Landmark Baptists, excluding all other true believers.”

Scriptural Qualifications of the Bride

Mr. Zeller cites Revelation 19:7-8 which says: **“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.”** This is the same bride that John the Baptist said Jesus had prior to Pentecost (John 3:29) and yet Mr. Zeller says it is the “church” which he says started on Pentecost!

We call your attention to two things in these two verses above. (1) **“His wife hath made herself ready”** indicates that not just being saved automatically puts a person in the bride of Christ. Salvation is free, is of grace, and is a sovereign work of the Spirit of God in regeneration. As we have stated and illustrated previously, the sinner is a participant in the new birth or regeneration, but is passive and not causative. Sinners are NOT born of their own will or decision (John 1:13). But here we have something different. The bride of Christ is composed of those who have made themselves ready and we see no evidence that free-lance “Christians,” irresponsible renegade “saints” and rogue “believers” have made themselves ready. (2) The phrase, **“The fine linen is the righteousness of saints”** is very interesting. The Greek scholar A.T. Robertson says, *“The righteous acts of the saints ...This is the explanation... of the bridal dress and explains why there is work for the Bride as well as for Christ.”* The bride of Christ will be dressed in her righteous deeds. Imputed righteousness is one thing and secures the salvation of the individual. But God is faithful and those who have suffered much as our Baptist forefathers have suffered – though under other names, perhaps – shall be rewarded along with those who serve faithfully in the Lord’s true Churches for they shall wear their own fine linen.

Mr. Zeller would have us believe that the New Jerusalem, that future home of the bride of Christ (Rev. 21:9-10) will also be inhabited by careless converts, renegade saints, and rogue believers as well as those who have faithfully served and suffered for Christ’s sake in true New Testament Churches.

Who Are They Mr. Zeller

Mr. Zeller has not told us who the “guests” will be at the wedding supper of the bride and the Bridegroom, nor has he told us who the multitude of “gentiles” will be who are allowed into the New Jerusalem to bring their riches into it as the Bible says in Revelation 21:24: **“And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.”** These saved gentiles cannot be the bride for she inhabits the New Jerusalem as her home and they come into it and bring their treasures unto it. So we ask Mr. Zeller just who these people are?

Wrong Premise Wrong Conclusion

Mr. Zeller sums up his errors very well for us. He wrote: *“Once it is understood that the church is made up of all true believers of this age, then it is a very simple thing to recognize that the bride of Christ will likewise be made up of all true believers of this age.”* His error is clearly seen and we believe in this present paper we have demonstrated this error. Mr. Zeller thinks the church is all the saved, though he has not demonstrated it nor can he prove it. Thus his premise is both unproved and cannot be proved! His whole argument falls apart because it is founded on his ideas and not on Bible facts.

Your Own Words Mr. Zeller

Again Mr. Zeller wrote: *“To correct this error of eschatology, it is first necessary to correct the error of ecclesiology. If they understand the true nature of the church, then they will understand who the bride really is.”* We are in one-hundred-percent agreement with this last statement of Mr. Zeller. If Mr. Zeller and his interdenominational friends understood the true nature of the church, then they would understand who the bride really is. If they understood that true Churches are local, New Testament “Landmark” Baptist Churches, they would understand who the bride really is.

Those Not With Christ

Mr. Zeller concludes his piece against Landmarkism with the verse: **“For he that is not against us is on our part”** (Mark 9:40). He says that the *“very troublesome sectarianism known as Landmarksim would do well to learn from our Lord’s words..”* Let us be honest with this verse and look at the context: **“And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbid him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name,**

that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part.” I doubt that Mr. Zeller is a miracle worker, but if he wishes to make application of this verse to himself, so be it. There is nothing here that would cause anyone to think that the free-lance miracle worker spoken of by the disciples was doing the same work as Christ and His disciples. What do we know about this man? We know only what is written and that is very little. We know that the word translated **“lightly”** is translated once this way and 12 other times as *“quickly.”* Thus it makes sense to say that the Lord Jesus Christ said, such a one as works a miracle in my name cannot quickly speak evil of me. If a man claims to be working miracles in the name of the Lord Jesus, he cannot turn around and immediately criticize the Lord. So leave him alone. It seems to me that John regarded this man as one of the **“tares”** which we are not to **“gather up”** lest we **“root up also the wheat with them”** (Matthew 13:29). The Lord said leave them alone!

But it is quite another thing to say that this man was approved of the Lord and thus should be approved of Landmarkers today. Especially is this true if you consider the other side of the coin. Look at what the Lord said in Matthew 12:30: **“He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.”** According to this last verse, the miracle worker of Mark 9:40 (above) is one that did not gather with the Lord Jesus and so is one who will scatter abroad. But, as we have shown before, Mr. Zeller is not one to consider either the immediate context or the larger of the Bible as a whole. We would point out that those who have not the same baptism as the Lord Jesus had, who have not become a part of the kind of Church Jesus built, who do not partake of the same kind of memorial Supper as He established, and have not the Commission He gave – all prior to Pentecost and not found in Mr. Zeller’s “church age” – have not gathered with the Lord Jesus Christ. The evidence is seen in the “scattered” condition of “Christendom” today, filled as it is with all kinds of “churches” with all kinds of origins, with a multitude of practices to suit the ideas of all sorts of people, and with doctrines to suit the tastes of everyone – just take your choice.

But there are some among the people called Landmark Baptists who have a valid claim to a scriptural origin and whose practice and doctrine is sound and in agreement with the Word of God. These have gathered with the Lord Jesus Christ just as the 11 did long ago. And, despite the writings of Mr. Zeller, the fires of persecution and the unbelief of many, these kind of Churches have existed since the first one and shall until the Lord Jesus Christ removes us from this world.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this extended article we have demonstrated several serious inconsistencies and faulty methods of interpretation used by Mr. Zeller. In fact, his only real consistency has been his consistent insistence that there exists a universal, invisible “church” made up of all the saved of the age of grace. He has abandoned or ignored all the sensible rules of biblical interpretation in pursuit of his ethereal “church.” He has changed the plain meaning of Bible words to suit his pet theory.

He has not demonstrated that such a mystical, universal, invisible “church” as he teaches really exists. He has contradicted the plain words of the Bible and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. His reckless methods of biblical interpretation are scary. If he follows the same abandon in his teaching of other subjects as he does ecclesiology, it is no wonder that he is also unsound on his soteriology. Please, Mr. Zeller, I invite you to put aside your interdenominational system long enough to consider what the Bible really has to say. I did and God showed me that that system is wrong and that hidden away among those people called Baptists are to be found the true Churches of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Recommended Book List

THE TRAIL OF BLOOD – J.M Carroll

EKKLESIA – THE CHURCH – B.H. Carroll

THE MINUTES OF THE PHILADELPHIA BAPTIST ASSOCIATION 1707 – 1807

FIFTY YEARS AMONG THE BAPTISTS – David Benedict

A SYSTEMATIC STUDY OF BIBLE DOCTRINE – T.P. Simmons

ECCLESIASTICAL RESEARCHES – Robert Robinson

A HISTORY OF THE BAPTISTS, Vol. 1 & 2 – John T. Christian

THE MYTH OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH EXPLODED – Roy Mason

REAL CHURCHES OR A FOG – S.E. Anderson

THREE WITNESSES FOR THE BAPTISTS – Curtis A. Pugh

THE BAPTIST ENCYCLOPEDIA – ed. William Cathcart

THE FIRST BAPTIST – S.E. Anderson

MY CHURCH – J.B. Moody

SEARCH FOR THE UNIVERSAL INVISIBLE CHURCH – Milburn Cockrell

ALIEN BAPTISM AND THE BAPTISTS – William Manilus Nevins

