

THE NEW TESTAMENT CONCEPT OF LAOS
ITS NATURE AND ROLE AND
ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE
BODY OF CHRIST

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NOT FOR CIRCULATION



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PREFACE

It is impossible to mention all those who contributed to the development of this study. I am grateful to their advice, interest and encouragement.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Any attempt to grasp a biblical theology of the laity (laos) and the Church (ekklēsia) would have to deal with a vast amount of literature in the Old and New Testament. However, it is not the intent of this thesis to analyse and evaluate all the biblical data, and the secondary literature is certainly too extensive to be dealt with here. The meanings of laos and ekklēsia vary so greatly that no single expression can be adequate for the full implications of the biblical concepts and their relationship to the body of Christ.

This thesis sees the calling forth of the laos and ekklēsia as an act of God's grace and freedom in Jesus Christ. In the ekklēsia God's purpose to create a laos and a community that gathers around Him finds its greatest expression. The event of the cross is the eschatological saving deed of God that gives the New Testament laos and ekklēsia their raison d'être and calling. Though there is a great deal of difference between the concept of ekklēsia and the remnant motif, in the ekklēsia God has called a people who will assure the survival of the human race from total annihilation. For the source and origin of the ekklēsia is Jesus Christ, the eschatological seed of God, the one who assures continuity between the past and the future and the survival of the human race. As the people of God the ekklēsia is called to serve God, the community and the world. As the body of Christ it lives in somatic reality, in ordinary life in the world.

The topic this thesis addresses is large, deep and complex and the writer is aware of the constant demands of Scripture upon an adequate understanding of the reality and nature of the laos and ekklēsia. Hence the present paper makes no pretense of theological finality.

In our attempt to investigate the New Testament concept of laos, its nature, its role, and its relationship to the body of Christ, the second chapter aims to present an investigation of the origin, development and meaning of laos and ekklēsia in the biblical literature. This is the foundation from which this study can proceed. The next chapter attempts to investigate the idea of the ekklēsia as the body of Christ in order to show its relationship to the concept of laos. The investigation of the concept of the body includes a study of some significant passages found in the epistles of 1 Corinthians, Romans, Colossians and Ephesians. It will certainly provide comprehensive information upon which the study will consider any implication or understanding with regard to the nature and role of the laos in the body of Christ.

The fourth chapter will investigate any theological, missiological, administrative or ecclesiological implication or understanding of the New Testament concept of laos. Attention will be given to the concept of mission and fellowship in the ekklēsia. The concepts of Church order, government and administration will be also considered as well as the notions of unity, gifts and service from which conclusions can be drawn concerning the nature and role of the laos.

CHAPTER II

BIBLICAL IDEA OF LAOS AND EKKLĒSIA

Biblical idea of Laos

In Greek, various words are used to express the concepts of people. For example, ethnos is the word used to explicitly express the concept of a group of human beings who share a common history and country, whereas the term dēmos generally expresses the idea of the public aspect of the people's assembly. Ochlos on the other hand denotes the idea of the crowd, the mass, or the populace, and polis signifies people who live under the political constitution of a city state. However, the term laos finds its origin in the military sphere and retains an archaic, political connotation.¹

Non Biblical Greek

In non Biblical Greek the term laos pertains to an archaic and poetic mode of speech and its role is confined only to the sphere and influence of this mode.² The etymology of the word is uncertain. Laos is Doric-Aeolic (Ionic, lēos; Attic, leōs) in form, and is very common in Homer, Herodotus, the tragedians, and Aristophanes.³ However, it

¹H. Bietenhard, "dēmos," "ethnos," "laos," "polis," New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1971), 2: 788-805. (Hereafter cited as NIDNTT).

²H. Strathmann, "laos," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, Publishing Company, 1967), 4: 29-30. (Hereafter cited as TDNT).

³Ibid., p. 30.

has been suggested that the word is a borrowed foreign term.¹

Homer's use denotes firstly a group of men, a 'crowd', a 'population'. In the Illiad, laos and laoi are specifically used for an army, a military company, soldiers in distinction from their leaders, men at arms, or troops.² In the post-homeric time a development of the meaning of laos occurred and the word came to mean the "common people," "folk," or "totality of a population."

Old Testament

The history of the word laos finds decisive importance in the LXX. Laos is very common and occurs about 2,000 times with a predominant singular usage and occurs only 140 times in the plural sense always meaning notions synonymous with ethnē. The shift of meaning in the history of the word has made it a new specific term that refers directly to the privileged position of Israel as the people of God.

Bietenhard suggests that "to the translators of the LXX the term laos, derived from the language of high style and ceremony, and infrequently used in the [Greek] of their time, seemed ideally suited for expressing the special relationship of → Israel to Yahweh."³ In the LXX the Hebrew of Laos is always 'am (apart from forty instances) and stands for Israel as God's chosen people,⁴ while the Hebrew gôy is used for the Gentiles, the ethnē. However, the LXX uses gôy in seven passages

¹Ibid. Probably Aegan.

²Ibid.; also H. Bietenhard, p. 795.

³Bietenhard, p. 796; also Strathmann, p. 32.

⁴However, other renderings of 'am are not concerned with the specific content of the Hebrew term (ie. laos) host (Josh 10:5) crowd (Job 31:34) inhabitants, people (1 Sam 24:10; Judg 18:22); see Strathmann, p. 32.

to refer to Israel.¹

Laos is used in Gen 41:40; 47:21; Jer 23:34 to signify the people as distinct from the priests, prophets, the rulers or ruling class. It also applies to Israel in the sense in which 'people of Yahweh' is used.² The idea of the 'people of the land' also conveys the same distinction.³

When 'am' does not refer to Israel there is an inclination to use ethnos: however, this is not applied consistently.⁴ There are many instances where laos and laoi refer to the Gentiles (translating 'am' and 'ammin') and ethnos stands for Israel (translating gôy). Also there are cases when laoi (translating gôyim) refers to Gentiles and ethnos (translating 'am') refers to Israel.⁵

'am and gôy

In an article on 'ethnos' Bertram suggests that both 'am' and gôy designate a group of men (or animals) that generally or evidently belong together. It is only little by little, in the course of Jewish religious history that the two terms were distinguished and that 'am' was related

¹Ibid., p. 32. The seven passages are: Josh 3:17; 4:1; Isa 9:2; 26:2; 58:2; Jer 9:8; 40:9. There is here evidence of a strong inclination to use ethnos for Israel.

²Israel is called 'people of Yahweh' about ten times. There are hundreds of pronominal suffix forms referring to Israel as 'my people' in which the suffix refers to Yahweh. There are also numerous occasions when Yahweh is called the 'God of Israel'; see Bietenhard, p. 796.

³See Exod 4:3,22,27; Ezek 7:27; 29; 46:2,9; Zech 7:5. The laos tes gēs refers to the whole population dwelling in the land. The nationality of these people referred to is always presupposed.

⁴See Gen 41:40,55; Exod 1:9,22; 19:5,27; Num 21:29; 24:14; Isa 18:2. Strathmann, p. 33; over 130 cases of ethnos stand for am laos, Bietenhard, p. 790. In most cases when ethnos is used for 'am' it refers to non-Israelites. This occurs twenty-one times in Pentateuch. cf. Severino Pancaro, "'People of God' in St John's Gospel," NTS. 16 (January 1970): 117, n. 7.

⁵Pancaro, pp. 116-118.

to Israel, and gôy to the Gentiles.¹ N. A. Dahl advances that 'am' comes to designate the chosen people, not because it means people in the national sense, but simply because the grammatical usage avoids using gôy in the construct state.² Though he does not show how the LXX took over the specific use of laos, Dahl tends to imply that both 'am' and laos are equivalent terms. He writes: "The sociological vagueness of the term [am], which gets its precise meaning from the context, is to an extent taken over by laos in the Septuagint, laos being in itself a sociological term with a rather fluid meaning."³

The main and popular meaning of laos in the LXX corresponds to the original meaning of 'am' as a term of relationship and refers to the people as a union.⁴ Furthermore, in the LXX the plural laos never refers to the people; the laoi are nations.⁵ Therefore the concept of many laoi in the one laos does not stand any longer, for laos refers to the union of the people.

Most important of all, in the LXX laos equals Israel. The Hebrew term 'am' gradually became a 'terminus technicus' for Israel, and gôy for the Gentiles.⁶ As Strathmann puts it: "The Hebrew Old Testament reveals already a corresponding inclination to use [am] for Israel and [gôy] for

¹G. Bertram, 'ethnos,' TDNT, 2: 362.

²N. A. Dahl, "A People for His Name (Acts 15:14)," NTS 4 (1967-8): 325-6.

³Ibid., p. 326.

⁴Strathmann, p. 33, n. 16. Laos as such does not have this relationship connection. However, it has a male reference, eg., as applied to the army.

⁵Ibid., n. 17. In Sirac 44: 15 laoi is in parallelism with ekklēsia and means 'the people'. In the LXX laoi is synonymous with ethnē and denotes the plurality of nations outside Israel.

⁶Pancaro, p. 116.

other nations."¹ This is a decisive point which is important in the history of laos since this term is used in the LXX to translate 'am. One may deduct that like 'am, laos became a 'terminus technicus' for Israel.

The following questions arise: Is laos equivalent to 'am? Why did the LXX translators choose laos to refer to Israel? In answering the first question it may be suggested that laos and 'am are not simply equivalent.² As it has been shown above there are cases when laos translates gôy (seven times) and ethnôs translates 'am (127 times). There are also cases when laos is used for 'ammim (twenty-one times in the Pentateuch) in which 'ammim refers to the Israelites. In thirty cases in the Pentateuch 'ammim is rendered by ethnē to refer to non-Israelites.³ Sometimes gôy refers to Israel and is translated by ethnos while 'am refers to Gentiles and is translated by laos. The majority of cases in which laos translates 'am reveals evidence of the LXX's preference for this term. However there were tendencies to use both laos and ethnos to translate either 'am or gôy. This does not suggest, though, that the two words are interchangeable or synonymous.⁴ There is revealed a distinct liking to translate 'am by laos and gôy by ethnos.⁵

Laos is equivalent to 'am as far as it translates its original idea. However, it may be worth noting at this point that the history of

¹Strathmann, p. 34. Though the distinction is not carried through with absolute consistency it nevertheless emphasizes Israel's special religious position.

²See Dahl, p. 325.

³Pancaro, pp. 117-8.

⁴Ibid., p. 117.

⁵Strathmann, pp. 34-5.

laos is substantiated in relationship to its historical antecedents. Laos is a Greek term that the LXX uses to translate the Hebrew 'am' because of its correspondence with the word.

This leads us to the second question. The conclusion that Pancaro arrived at is that "'the nobler' word was chosen to indicate the 'nobler' reality."¹ For him laos is a technical word which rises above its vulgar meanings of "mass of people," "people" as distinguished from the leaders or priests, and its ordinary meaning of people in a national sense.² Israel, for him, is the laos of God, the "people" par excellence, set apart above all other nations (ethnē). Strathmann suggests that because of its archaic and poetic origin laos is a solemn word which "expresses a sense of distinction from all other people on the basis of religion, an awareness that Israel stands in a special relation to Yahweh, who is comparably superior to all the gods of the nations."³

The point is that the use of laos as distinct from ethnos in the LXX is not a strong evidence to conclude that laos in the same writings refers to Israel as God's chosen people. More important are the contexts where laos is to be understood as 'the people of God' (laos Theou). As Strathmann suggests, the meaning is not inherent in laos: "what counts is not the word laos as such, but the continual recurrence of the phrase laos Theou. This is what gives colour to the special use of the simple laos, for Israel."⁴ Other combinations such as laos mou outline the meaning of laos as the 'people of God'.⁵

¹Pancaro, p. 118. ²Ibid. ³Strathmann, p. 35.

⁴Ibid., p. 118.

⁵In Exodus 8 Yahweh's people Pharaoh's people are set in antithesis. Laos alone as well as ethnos raises the question: which people?

As laos Theou, Israel is God's possession by the free act of Yahweh in a full atmosphere of freedom, sheer grace, and love (Deut 4:37; 7:6, 8; 9:5, 6). Yahweh kept Israel for Himself as laos periousios apo pantōn tōn ethnōn (Exod 19:5; Deut 14:2; 7:6), or as laos egklēros (Deut 4:20).¹ Due to Yahweh's choice Israel is a holy people, a laos hagios ei Kuriō tō Theō sou (Deut 7:6; cf. 14:2, 21; 26:18f.).

Laos in Hellenistic Judaism

In Josephus there is much inconsistency in the use of the word laos. The ordinary LXX use does not appear in the Bellum Judaicum. Here he uses ethnos to commonly refer to the Jewish people and laos in the popular sense for "people," "crowd," or "population." There is a different use of laos in the Antiquities which refers to Israel though it is used at times for other nations. However ethnos usually stands for non-Israelite people.² Strathmann explains this fluctuation in Josephus in terms of the influence exerted by the LXX on the presentation of the earlier history of Israel.³

Philo uses the Attic form leōs as well as laos. Laos stands for a plurality of those made perfect, those who have attained to unceasing epistēmē.⁴ Here it is suggested that "this specific flavour of the term in the Greek New Testament is here completely lost under the sway of speculation which obliterates all historical distinctions."⁵

In the inscriptions of the Hellenistic Diaspora laos is taken to apply only to the Jewish people as a whole. It is not taken for other

¹When laos is applied to Israel without the genitive Theou there is a distinctive relation of possession in mind. See Strathmann, p. 35.

²Strathmann, pp. 37-8. ³Ibid., p. 38

⁴Ibid. ⁵Ibid., p. 39.

peoples. Hence it could be concluded that this usage of Diaspora Judaism was affected by that of the LXX.¹

Laos in the New Testament

When coming to the New Testament one must ask oneself whether there is any continuity between the LXX use of laos and that of the New Testament. Does the New Testament break down a technical use of laos? Do the New Testament writers use the word laos unanimously or is there some difference among them?

The word laos occurs 140 times in the New Testament (apart from John 8:2), occurring eighty-four times in Luke alone, of which thirty-six are in the Gospel and forty-eight in Acts. Mark uses the word three times, and Matthew uses it fourteen times. In John the word occurs twice in the Gospel and nine times in Revelation. There are also twelve occurrences of the word in Paul, thirteen in Hebrews, two in First Peter, and one in each of Second Peter and Jude.²

Laos in the Gospels

Laos occurs fifty times in the Gospels and most of these occurrences are found in Luke. It is important to note that Mark has instances shared by both Matthew and Luke so that Mark 7:6 and 14:2 occur in Matthew, and Mark 11:32 and 14:2 occur in Luke. Strathmann suggests that "apart from Mk. 14:2 = Mt. 26:5 = Lk. 22:2 there is no laos passage common to Mk., Mt. and Lk."³

¹Ibid.

²Bietenhard, p. 799, and Strathmann, p. 50.

³Strathmann, p. 50.

Laos in Matthew

Regarding the use of laos in Matthew one must not overlook the evangelists's main emphasis which is carried out in the varying discourses of the book. Also one must take care in order not to misplace him in the development of the history of this term.

The milieu of thinking of the evangelist Matthew shows a set of contradictory attitudes concerning Jews and Gentiles. Thus one sees the disciples called on the one hand to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and not into the way of the Gentiles (10:5f.). Jesus is conscious that He is sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (15:24) but in 28:18-20 He commands His disciples to go into the whole world. There is thus an apparent contradiction between Judaistic and universalist tendencies. As Tagawa suggests, the social milieu of Matthew is found in his community consciousness which is a "continuation of the community of Israel . . . For him, the Church is the true Israel."¹ Though the people of Israel and the Christian are not directly equal for Matthew, both are in the milieu in which he finds his own existence.²

In 1:21 Matthew quotes Ps 130:8 (LXX). He uses laos to refer to Jesus' people, "gar sozei ton laon autou". The Psalmist uses 'Israel' in this psalm. Those people who are of the Lord and who are to be saved are traditionally Israel, but here Matthew uses laos to refer to Jesus' people, that is, Jesus' ekklēsia.³

¹Kenzo Tagawa, "People and Community in Matthew," NTS 16 (January 1970): 159.

²Ibid.

³It is important to note that only Matthew, among the synoptics, uses the word ekklēsia (16:18; 18:17). This could have much implication in his use of laos for Jesus' people in 1:21.

The parable of the wicked husbandman (21:33-36) also includes the idea of Jesus' people: "the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to an ethnos [singular] producing the fruit of it." The ethnos here refers to a community devoid of the 'you' which in that instance refers to the leaders of the Jewish people, the scribes and the Pharisees (v. 45). There is here a kind of correspondence between ethnos and the laos of 1:21.

Matthew seems to use laos to elucidate the uniqueness of Israel. He does not envisage any other laos. This is expressed in such passages as 2:4 ("tou archiereis kai grammateis tou laou") and 21:23 ("hoi archiereis hoi presbuteroi tou laou"), In 13:15 he quotes Isa 6:9-10 and the passage of 15:8 is from Isa 20:13. This seems to indicate that for Matthew laos equals Israel. This is pointed out clearly in the text of 2:6, taken from 2 Sam 5:2.

However Matthew also uses laos (singular) in its general meaning of 'crowd', 'population', 'people' with no implication of membership of one national union in distinction from other people (4:23; 26:5; 27:25, 64).¹ This particular meaning of no special significance functions as a breaking down of the popular LXX meaning of 'people' in the sense of nation. There is also evidence that laos stands for a preceding ochlos (27:24, 25). In Matt 4:23 laos has the sense of 'population'. Ochlos is used in Matthew 21:26 while Luke uses laos (20:6). It is evident from these examples that here there is no idea of a usage of the laos which refers to a distinct national union of the people.

Matthew also uses ethnē with the epithet panta to mean all peoples (24:9; 28:19). Ethnē clearly refers to Gentiles in 4:15 (cf. Isa 8:23).

¹Strathmann, p. 51.

It is used also in contrast to the Jews (6:32). Jesus speaks of the salvation of the ethnē though He was sent to the Jews (8:10ff; 15:24).

As far as Matthew is concerned he sees Israel as a national community which he overlaps with the people of Jesus, the ekklēsia. For this reason he seems to adopt a double attitude: not to go beyond Israel and yet to go and make disciples of all the nations (28:19). Both Israel and the people of Jesus seem to be superimposed in Matthew.

Laos in Mark

Mark, like Matthew, uses laos in its general meaning for 'people', 'crowd', (11:32; 14:2). In 11:18 the laos corresponds to an ochlos. It is important to note that Mark uses ochlos while Luke uses laos (cf. Luke 19:48) which indicates a breaking down in the use of laos and a difference of usage among the evangelists. Again in Mark 14:2 the laos is equated to the mob, the people who are assembled in a crowd, and therefore carries the same meaning as ochlos. Ethnē is used in Mark to mean all peoples (11:17).

Laos in Luke - Acts

About sixty per cent of the uses of laos in the New Testament are found in Luke-Acts. As Minear says, the term laos is more central in Luke than in Mark or Matthew.¹ It is customary for Luke to use laos in the sense of 'crowd', 'population', 'people'.² In some cases laos stands for a preceding ochlos.³ In Acts 13:45; 14:11-19; 16:22; 17:8;

¹Paul S. Minear, "Jesus' Audiences, According to Luke," Nov T. 16 (February 1974): 81-2.

²Cf. Luke 1:21; 3:15, 18; 7:1; 8:47; 20:19, 45; 23:35; Acts 2:47; 3:9, 11, 12; 4:1, 2, 17, 21; 5:13, 20, 25f., 37; 12:4; 21:30 etc.

³Luke 7:29; cf. 7:24; 8:47, cf. 8:42, 45; 9:13, cf. 9:12.

17:13; 19:26, 35 etc., Luke uses ochlos or ochloi instead of laos for non-Jewish crowds. When the crowds are Jewish laos is regularly used (Acts 7:17; 4:2; 5:26; 6:12).

Sometimes the use of the epithet pas adds a popular meaning to laos.¹ Laos is also used to refer to the people in distinction from the rulers, the priests, the leaders, or the members of the Sanhedrin (Luke 22:2; 23:5, 13; Acts 6:12; 10:41; 13:15).

In Luke 2:30-32, comprised of three quotations from Isaiah (40:5; 42:6; 52:10), laoi parallels ethnē. In Isaiah 52:10 the LXX has ethnōn for laōn. When laos and ethnē are placed in antithesis (Luke 2:32, from Isaiah 42:6 and 46:13) and when laos is used with references to Israel (Luke 21:23, from Isaiah 6:9 f.) Luke seems to use laos to mean Israel. This is particularly plain in 2:10; 7:5. The laos is compounded with the house of David (Luke 1:68, 77). The laos is seen in the synagogue and the temple (1:10; 20:1). At the resurrection of the widow's son the crowd acclaims that "God has visited the people" (Luke 7:16). Luke uses laos for Israel in Acts 26:17, 23 (from Deut 32:43), and in specific expressions such as 'ho laos Israel' (4:10; 13:24), 'ho laos outos' (28:26, 27, from Isa 6:9 f.), 'ho laos outos Israel' (13:17), and 'ho laos tōn Ioudaiōn' (12:11). The uniqueness of Israel as a laos is further shown in 21:28, cf. 28:17; 10:2; 3:23 (from Lev 23:29); 10:41, 42; 13:17, 31; 19:4; 4:8; 23:5.

However in Luke-Acts there are passages in which the Jewish people are called ethnos.² In Acts 26:23 a clear distinction is nevertheless made between the people of Israel and the ethnē. The ethnē

¹Luke 3:21; 7:29; 8:47; 9:13; 18:43; 21:38; Acts 3:9; 5:34; 10:41; etc.

²See Luke 7:5; 23:2; Acts 10:27; 24:2, 10, 17; 26:4; 28:19.

(Acts 4:25, cf. Ps 2:1 f.; 7:7; 13:19) are found to live in the futility of their minds (Acts 14:16). But to the God-fearing Gentile the Spirit comes to produce an acceptance of the Gospel (Acts 10:35, 45; 11:1, 18; cf. Eph 2:11 f., 17-22). Paul preaches to the Gentiles only after the Jews have rejected the Gospel (Acts 13:46; 18:6; 19:9).

When Israel is called ethnos this is generally by non-Jews or in speeches before non-Jews. According to this Strathmann suggests that the ethnos-Israel passages seem to confirm the specific or technical use of laos for Israel.¹ However Luke also uses ethnos in contrast to Jews and Christians (Luke 12:21; 10:24).

Commenting on the use of laos in Luke, Minear writes that the term is seen as the "initial and ultimate audience for God's messengers".² In Acts 15:14; 18:10 Luke seems to break down a use of laos for Israel to apply it to a people taken out of the ethnē. God is minded "labein ek ethnōn laōn to onomati autou" (15:14). This laos out of the ethnē is independent of national and biological ties. In Corinth Paul is aware that: "disti laos esti moi polus en tē polei autē" (18:10). The Jews have rejected God, now he turns to the ethnē.³

Laos in John

John uses both the word laos and the word ethnos to refer to Israel. In 11:48:52 and 18:14 laos is used twice and ethnos four times. Ethnos is found once more in 18:35.

With regard to the use of these two terms in John

¹Strathmann, p. 53.

²Minear, p. 82; See Luke 1:17; 3:15-18, 21.

³Acts 18:6; 13:46; 28:26, 27.

Severino Pancaro argues that John understands believers to be the new laos Theou. This, according to him, is indicated by the use of laos as distinct from ethnos. He also argues that John understands believers to be the 'alēthinos Israel' as indicated by the use of 'Israel' and 'Israelites' as distinct from 'Ioudaios'.¹ From an investigation of the evidence from the LXX Pancaro concludes that "laos also has a 'technical' meaning. It is the special attribute of Israel. On the other hand ethnos (and ethnē in particular) is especially reserved for the Gentile nations."² John Painter is correct in pointing out that "the use of laos and ethnos in the LXX does not support this contention."³ He reminds us of the many instances where laos and laoi refer to Gentiles (translating 'am' and 'ammim') and ethnos refers to Israel (translating gōy); and also the times when laoi (translating gōyim) refers to Gentiles and ethnos (translating 'am') refers to Israel.⁴ From the evidence it can be said with Painter that "there is no necessary clear-cut distinction between laos and ethnos . . . But when used of the people of Israel it [laos] is virtually synonymous with ethnos. It might be that ethnos stressed more the political-national nature of Israel while laos stressed the social reality."⁵

¹See Pancaro, pp. 115-129; also Pancaro, "The Relationship of the Church to Israel in the Gospel of St John," NTS 21 (April 1975): 396-405.

²Pancaro, p. 118: "The 'nobler' word was chosen to indicate the 'nobler' reality."

³John Painter, "The Church and Israel in the Gospel of John: A Response," NTS 25 (October 1978): 104.

⁴Ibid.; also Pancaro, pp. 116-8.

⁵Painter, p. 105.

In John 11:48-52 Pancaro agrees that ethnos refers to the Jewish nation and laos for "Caiphas meant the Jewish nation."¹ However he argues that laos has a double meaning for John. On the first level laos includes 'the children of God', the Jews of the Diaspora, and on the second level laos indicates all the children of God, which includes believing Gentiles as well as Jews.²

The conclusion of Painter that "laos is not a word symbol of the new people of God"³ is correct as it takes into account the whole context in which Caiphas uses both ethnos and laos to mean the same thing. Furthermore, with regard to the relationship between Israel and the Church there is no textual ground to indicate as Pancaro does in John 1:31 that Israel is to be identified with the believers. Nor does John describe Israel as the true people of God.⁴

Pancaro also contrasts the expression 'the King of Israel' (John 1:49; 12:13) with the title 'the King of the Jews' (John 18:33-7; 19:12-16, 19-22). Painter on the other hand argues that both expressions have the same messianic implications, that both have nationalistic implications,⁵ and that 'the 'King of the Jews' is introduced by Pilate as a non-Jew, while 'the King of Israel' is a Palestinian Jewish conception."⁶

¹Pancaro, p. 122. The interchangeability of laos by ethnos in 11:48-52 would tend to indicate an idea of equivalence.

²Ibid. ³Painter, p. 107.

⁴Pancaro suggests that John 1:47 presents Nathanael as the model of the true Israelite. This is a clue to treat Israel as God's true people, pp. 123-4.

⁵Painter, p. 109.

⁶Ibid. Jesus rejected any role as national-political liberator of Israel. (John 1:50-1; 6:15; 18:36).

It is evident from John's writing that the evangelist is asserting that the religion of the Jews is no longer valid (4:21-4), and that Jewish Christians were no longer Jews in the religious sense, for the Jewish festivals, rites, religion etc., had no claim on the Christians (2:6, 13; 4:9; 5:1; 6:4; 7:2; 11:55; 19:40, 42). Nor does John describe the Church as the new Israel. For him Jesus is the alēthinē vine, the true Israel, the one who is opposed to Judaism. On this ground the door is opened for all men to participate in the life of the vine.¹

However the use of laos in John does not suggest that the believers share the status of the people of God. The believing community finds its reality in relationship with Jesus, as the branches abide in the vine. As Painter says the believers "are the 'flock' under the shepherd, the 'flock' who hear and obey the shepherd's word."²

Laos in the rest of the New Testament

It may be observed that outside of the synoptics and Acts the distinction between the laos and the ruling class, high priests, or leaders does not occur.³ Furthermore the popular meaning of laos for 'crowd', 'population', 'people', as it is used in the Lucan writings and some references in Matthew and Mark, is not found in the rest of the New Testament.⁴

Paul uses the term laos to express the uniqueness of Israel as it is shown in Rom 15:10.⁵ Laos is also used for Israel in 2 Peter 2:1; Jude 5; Heb 2:17; 5:3; 7:5, 11, 27; 9:7, 19; 11:25. The laos has a

¹Ibid., p. 112. ²Ibid.

³Strathmann, p. 31. ⁴Ibid.

⁵From Deut 32:43; 1 Cor 14:21, from Isa 28:11, 12; 1 Cor 10:7, from Exod 32:6.

religious basis in Rom 11:1 f. (from Ps 94:14); 15:10 (from Deut 32:43); Heb 10:30 (from Ps 135:14); and 11:25. It is God's laos.

However, if the New Testament has built upon the LXX usage of the term in the epistles and Revelation, it now goes beyond it. In Rom 9:25-6; 2 Cor 6:16; Titus 2:14; Heb 4:9; 8:10; 10:30; 13:12; 1 Pet 2:9 f.; Rev 18:4; and 21:3 laos is used in the sense of a community of people with no historical or biological preconditions. This laos affirms the dignity and significance of Christ and the only condition to be fulfilled by man in order to belong to the laos is the abiding of faith.

The historical Israel can no longer claim to be the exclusive people of God. However they will become His people in the time of salvation (Rom 9:23 ff.) The 'new people of God' is a laos periousios.¹ To this end Paul calls the Gentile Christians God's people, the temple of the living God (2 Cor 6:14 ff., from Lev 26:12 and Ex 37:27).

In Hebrews and Revelation 21:3 the idea of the transfer of laos from Israel to a 'new people' is also expressed. Thus, Hebrews uses terminology from the Old Testament cultus to apply laos to this 'new people' for whom Christ became incarnate in order to expiate for their sins (2:17). This laos is given a sabbath rest (4:9) and is sanctified by the blood of Christ (13:12).

Within the confines of the laos there is no national, racial or religious exclusivism. In Christ there is no Jew nor Greek, no slave nor free, no male nor female, for all are one in Him.² The Christ-event has broken all distinctions between Jews and Gentiles. Though they are

¹Titus 2:14; cf. Exod 19:5, 6; 23:22; Deut 7:6; 14:2.

²Gal 3:26 ff.; cf. 1 Cor 12:13; Col 3:11.

from the ethnē,¹ the Gentile Christians are called hoi loipoi.² They accept the Gospel (Eph 2:11 f., 17-22) and are grafted into the olive tree, Israel (Rom 11:17).

Thus both Jews and Gentiles belong to the same God by faith in Christ.³ The unbelief of the Jews (Rom 11:11) has meant blessings to the Gentiles (Rom 11:12) who have become recipients of God's righteousness (Rom 9:30). However, though the Gentiles are no longer strangers but fellow-citizens and members of God's household (Eph 2:19 they are not saved alone. The salvation of the Gentiles means the turning of Israel to Christ and the Gospel as can be seen in Rom 11:11-14, 25. The book of Revelation brings also the idea that Christ has redeemed for Himself a laos from every nation who have become His kingdom of priests.⁴ And this laos constitutes an innumerable multitude from the ethnē (7:9) which walks in the light of the new Jerusalem (21:24, 26).

In Summary. From a survey of the evidence of the New Testament use of laos it can be concluded that there is no clear-cut distinction between laos and ethnos. When used of the people of Israel both terms have the same meaning.⁵ The plural ethnē always refers to Gentiles except the inclusive "all nations" or simply "the nations" of Revelation,⁶

¹Rom 11:13; Gal 2:12; Eph 3:1.

²1 Thess 4:13; 5:6; Eph 2:3; Rev 9:20.

³Rom 4:16ff.; Gal 3:7, 13 f., 26-29.

⁴Rev 5:9, 10, from Exod 19:6.

⁵However laos can be used in a most restricted sense than ethnos as in the Synoptics (cf. Matt 4:23; 27:25, 64; Mark 11:32; Luke 1:21; 3:18, 21); also ethnos is used by non-Jews.

⁶Rev 10:11; 11:9; 17:15; 18:3, 23.

while the singular always refers to Israel,¹ unless otherwise identified as Egypt (Acts 7:7), Samaria (Acts 8:9), or "every nation."

There is evidence of the LXX influence in the New Testament as laos can mean a group or crowd of Israelites.² The use of the plural laoi shows also this influence. However, it is now applied to Israel contrary to LXX usage.³

There is no unanimity among the New Testament writers as to the use of laos. There is evidence that they differ in their use of the word. Nor is there a great number of parallel uses of laos in the New Testament. For example when Luke has laos John has hoi Ioudaioi (about seventy times in the Gospel), or ochlos (twenty times).⁴

Though there seems to be continuity between the New Testament and the LXX there is evidence that the New Testament writers are breaking down a LXX meaning of laos to empty it of its biological and historical exclusivism. Laos and ethnos are no longer mutually exclusive. The meaning of ethnos tends to move in the direction of that of laos as a social-national reality.⁵

Such titles as laos Theou, laos mou, laos periousios, as they are used with respect to Christians, suggest that laos "may have acquired a new shade of meaning."⁶ However, if laos had been adopted for the Christian community because of the denotation of the people of Israel as God's chosen people, this does not necessarily mean that this term was

¹Luke 7:5; 23:2; John 11:48-52; 18:35; Acts 10:22; 24:2, 10, 17.

²See Acts 13:45; 14:11-19; 16:22; 17:8, 13; 19:26, 35.

³Strathmann, p. 51. See Luke 2:30; Acts 4:25, 27, from Ps 2:1; Rom 15:1, from Ps 117:11.

⁴Ibid., pp. 50-1. ⁵Painter, p. 105. ⁶Pancaro, p. 120.

generally accepted among Christians.¹

The most explicit texts of the New Testament that apply laos to the Christian Church are 1 Pet 2:9-10 and Heb 4:9. There is no doubt that many New Testament writers use language to suggest that the Christian community is a continuity and a replacement of Israel as God's people.²

Biblical idea of ekklēsia

The English term 'Church' is the usual translation of the Greek word ekklēsia. To avoid the ambiguities and hindrances carried by the English term, the present section will use the original Greek word so to retain in full breadth the meaning of ekklēsia, and to better grasp its original denotations.³ Also in order to understand the New Testament use of ekklēsia we need to be aware of the historical antecedents and influences of the term.

Ekklēsia in the Old Testament

It is from the ekklēsia of the Old Testament that the ekklēsia of the New Testament takes its name and primary idea. As Küng says: "the important thing for the New Testament ekklēsia is not Greek etymology, but the use of the word in the Greek translation of the Old Testament."⁴

¹It could have been rejected by the Christians because of its national denotation.

²The word ekklēsia may provide this idea.

³See Hans Küng, The Church, trans. Ray Ockenden and Rosaleen Ockenden (London: Search Press, 1971), p. 81. He writes that "the word 'Church' has, through varied usage in the course of centuries, developed a variety of meanings and nuances."

⁴Ibid., p. 82.

The word is a usual rendering of 'qahal' by the LXX translators,¹ and it is used about one hundred times.²

The Old Testament uses two terms to express the gathering together of the people or their representative heads: 'qahal' and 'edhah'.³ The translation of 'qahal' is distributed between the two Greek words ekklēsia and sunagogē.⁴ Schmidt writes that both ekklēsia and sunagogē in the LXX mean much the same with regard to the Hebrew words behind them; "both words are used both technically and non-technically, as underlined by the fact that translation varies between 'assembly', 'company' and congregation".⁵ Neither word is intrinsically technical. At times both words were applied to very distinct kinds of gatherings of the people.

It is important to indicate that if the two words basically mean the same thing they are not intrinsically synonymous. The root meaning of edhah in the niphal stands for 'appointment', 'agreement', a gathering of the people and society of Israel,⁶ its elders and princes.⁷ The root

¹Ibid.; also L. Coenen, "ekklēsia", NIDNTT 2: 292; The adoption of ekklēsia was accepted by the LXX from Deuteronomy onwards.

²K. L. Schmidt, "ekklēsia", TDNT 3: 527.

³ekklēsia basically represents the Hebrew 'qahal': a meeting of the people summoned together. However 'qahal' is not always rendered by ekklēsia. The Hebrew 'edhah' which stands for the community of the people as a juridical or cultic community, is usually translated by sunagogē. 'Edhah' was never translated by ekklēsia, see Coenen, p. 292; Küng, p. 82.

⁴See Coenen, p. 292; also Schmidt, p. 527: ekklēsia appears in LXX one hundred times, of which twenty-two times are in Apocrypha. When there is a Hebrew equivalent it is almost always qahal. Qahal is translated twenty-one times by sunagogē in Genesis, Leviticus and Numbers and fifteen times in Ezekiel. Sunagogē appears 225 times (with a few exceptions) for the Hebrew edhah. Thus it could express the sense of both qahal and edhah, while ekklēsia could only be used with a specific meaning.

⁵Schmidt, p. 528. ⁶Exod 32:1; Deut 4:10; 1 Chr 13:5.

⁷1 Kgs 8:1; 1 Chr 28:1.

meaning of qahal means 'call' and the word represents the 'am or the congregation of the people assembled together.¹ However, qahal stands primarily for "the summons to war of all the men capable of bearing arms."² And while qahal came to have a "religious element alongside that of a special, solemn assembly,"³ it no longer carries its strict religious meaning (1 Kgs 8:65; 12:13 ff.) to mean simply the special general assembly of the people.⁴ Qahal instead of edhah was used to represent official gatherings of the people.⁵

Ekklēsia was the word chosen by the LXX to translate qahal. Together with qahal it carries a predominantly secular meaning.⁶ Its usage in the Hellenistic world denotes a gathering of citizens. Johnston suggests that it "was not so distinctly Jewish as to be unsuitable for a society which quickly accepted Gentiles to membership in the profession of their faith in Christ as Lord."⁷

When the occurrences of edhah and qahal are considered it can be observed that their use is mainly confined to the historical books of the Bible. They have no place in the great prophecies of messianic import (ie. Isaiah), nor do they occur in passages where the position of Israel

¹Deut 23:2 ff.; Judg 20:2; Jer 26:17.

²Coenen, p. 293; Gen 49:6; Num 22:4; verbal form in 2 Sam 20:14; 1 Kgs 12:21.

³Ibid.; see Deut 9:10; 10:4; 23:2 ff.

⁴Ezra 10:1; Neh 8:2; Jer 44:15.

⁵Deut 5:22; 1 Kgs 18:14 ff.; Neh 8:2. See George Johnston, The Doctrine of the Church in the New Testament (Cambridge: University Press, 1943), p. 36, n. 2 and p. 37, n. 2.

⁶Schmidt, p. 527. ⁷Johnston, pp. 43-4.

as a peculiar people is implied.¹ Where the two words are used in the same context it is evident that edhah expresses unambiguously the idea of the covenant community as a whole.² On the other hand qahal expresses the idea of the community in its present form, the regular assembly of the people on secular occasions (Num 14:5; 17:12), a judicial assembly,³ a political body (Ezra 10:8, 12; Neh 8:2, 17).

Ekklēsia in Greek Judaism

When one turns to the use of ekklēsia in Greek Judaism one is confronted with a position similar to the one discussed above. However there is a more pronounced technical use of ekklēsia under the influence of secular Greek. As Schmidt suggests "there is now more frequent references to national assemblies in the secular sphere."⁴

Ekklēsia in the Greek World

In the Greek world ekklēsia is rarely a religious term, but is more often a political expression. It is a meeting together of the people to conduct the secular and the political business of life. It is a government of the people, for the people, by the people. In that sense ekklēsia is dēmos. Küng writes:

For all its religious undertones, ekklēsia refers to a political meeting, not to a cultic or sacred meeting. And the ekklēsia only refers to the actual congregation, each particular "session"; there is no ekklēsia in the intervals between them.⁵

¹Coenen, pp. 293-4. Edhah occurs with great frequency in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Joshua. Qahal appears less frequently in these books than edhah, but it abounds in Ezra and Nehemiah.

²See Exod 16:1 ff.; Lev 4:13; Num 14:1 ff.; 16:3; 20:1 ff.; 1 Kgs 12:1 ff.

³Deut 9:10; 23:3 ff.; Judg 21:5, 8; Mic 2:5.

⁴Schmidt, p. 528. ⁵Küng, p. 82.

Schmidt writes: "Thus, although ekklēsia is from the very first a secular and worldly expression, it expresses the supreme claim of the Christian community in face of the world."¹ Paul particularly prefers to use ekklēsia with a secular and political connotation in analogy to the assembly of Christians who assemble together as full citizens (ekklētoi) of the city of God to execute certain religious acts.²

With regard to a New Testament reassessment of the term, Schmidt is right when he says that:

Constitutive for the Christian ekklēsia with Greek usage is the line from Septuagint to the New Testament. Only on this line does the word take on its particular significance . . . The ekklēsia of the ancient dēmos is a formal parallel from the secular world, but it corresponds only in the sense of an analogy, . . . This is not altered by the fact that at least in the classical period the ekklēsia in the sense of a popular assembly is not without a religious undertone and is one of the main institutions of the divinely given polis and its order.³

"The ekklēsia is from the very first a secular and worldly expression"⁴ which the LXX and later on the New Testament adopted. Paul in particular uses ekklēsia as a secular and worldly expression to present the claim that Christians live an ordinary life in the world. It was "an expression which was no longer used very much by Jews,"⁵ and which Christians adopted.

Ekklēsia in the New Testament

Ekklēsia in the Gospels

It is thus with a history of its own that we now turn to the New Testament use of ekklēsia, the meaning of which came from a secular and political phenomenon. The immediate and striking observation one can

¹Schmidt, p. 515. ²Ibid., p. 514, n 27.

³Ibid., p. 514. ⁴Ibid., p. 515. ⁵Ibid., p. 516.

make in reference to the word ekklēsia is that with the exception of Matt 16:18 and 18:17, the word is entirely absent from the gospels. However Luke does use the word some twenty three times in Acts. Other references are found in the Pauline letters and Revelation.¹

Ekklēsia in Matthew

Much attention has been given to the use of ekklēsia in the two passages of Matthew, which have been the subject of much textual, literary and lexical criticism.² However it is the view of the writer that due to the importance of these verses great caution is required. Whether the expression is an interpolation or not the nature of the Gospel tradition prevents us from rejecting its authenticity without attempting to see the saying within the Matthean 'sitz im Leben'.³

The mention of the ekklēsia in 16:18 "is not an isolated incident in the life of Jesus as the history of Christ."⁴ It does not stand alone. Matthew has taken pains to picture Christ as a new Moses, the one who raises a new Israel in calling a faithful remnant outside historical Israel. The picture of the ekklēsia in Matt 16:18; 18:17 connotes the idea of the remnant. Here Jesus speaks of the Church as an ordered community and gives orders regarding community life. Also Matthew seems to tell us that the ekklēsia has taken the place of Israel as a whole.

¹Coenen, pp. 297-8. From Luke's usage it seems that ekklēsia had gained wide usage; also Schmidt, p. 504; E. Clinton Gardner, The Church as a Prophetic Community (Philadelphia: Paternoster Press, 1968), p. 136. Ekklēsia occurs about 110 times in the New Testament.

²Schmidt, pp. 518-520.

³See Krister Stendahl, The School of St Matthew and its use of the Old Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1954), pp. 13-19.

⁴Schmidt, p. 520.

It is the total replacement of Israel as the laos of God, and as such has universal dimensions (Matt 28:19 ff.).

In the picture of the ekklēsia Jesus focuses on a laos from beyond the bounds of Israel. The community of the ekklēsia is called for a worldwide commission. It is not to be only a Jewish sect. It belongs to the present age and the age yet to come. It is not yet perfect and sinless, nor are its members already in the eschatological Kingdom of God.

Matthew 16:18

Here Christ is portrayed as the Messiah, the Son of Man, the one who represents the people of the saints of the Most High. The insight that Peter seems to demonstrate focuses on Christ and His creation of a people. Jesus cannot exist by Himself, He cannot be the Messiah or the Son of God if He does not create a redeemed people or if He does not have a community that gathers around Him. For Matthew, Christ is more than the Baptist, more than Elijah, more than Jeremiah, more than a prophet, Christ is the Saviour, the Builder of His people and of His ekklēsia.¹ The ekklēsia of Christ shall never be destroyed,² for it proclaims the Kingdom of God and demonstrates the very power of that Kingdom, knowing that final judgement always stands at the door of the Kingdom yet in the future.

The ekklēsia finds its center in Jesus Christ, and as such it is the eschatological people of God, the people of the Messiah, of the new age whose calling is a living embodiment in the world and the community

¹Ibid., p. 521, n 59.

²There is a parallelism between the Danielic Kingdom of God which shall last for ever and never be destroyed and Jesus' saying about the unmovable foundation of His ekklēsia in Matt 16:18. However there is no equation of the ekklēsia with the Kingdom of God.

of the Lordship of Christ. To be in the ekklēsia of Christ is to take up a life of service and suffering, to and for the world and the community.

It is in the very existence and life of Christ that the ekklēsia of Matt 16:18 finds its source. The creation of the ekklēsia as an eschatological congregation is "proved by eschatological events of the self-witness of Jesus as Son of Man and the institution of the Lord's Supper."¹ This last becomes a promise that the ekklēsia will be built by Christ.

However Christ's ekklēsia is a new ekklēsia founded not on Sinai or the old covenant but on the Messiah Himself. It provides a link between the old covenant and the Kingdom of God, between humanity in the past and humanity in the future. With reference to the past the word ekklēsia is here used with Messianic meaning in relationship to a people: Israel whose history was once the history of a society of men especially consecrated to God. With reference to the future the ekklēsia belongs to the time of the ultimate promise to the world. It brings hope with regard to the possibility of total annihilation of the human race. With reference to the present, the ekklēsia of Matthew is historical in the sense in which history continues to have a certain meaning due to the unique 'shape' of Christ - eschatology. In the Christ-event the new age has dawned but is not yet consummated. It appears as a sign of God's judgement and saving work, and as a call to service and suffering in the world,

Matthew 18:17

The ekklēsia that gathers around Jesus is preserved and sustained by His life which has the potential for human survival. The

¹ Schmidt, p. 322.

The nature of the ekklēsia as portrayed in Matthew 18 thus finds its greatest expression in the Person of Jesus Christ. It is in the context "it is not the will of my Father who is in Heaven that one of these little ones should perish" (v. 14) that one can also understand the nature of the Church in Chapter 18.

As will be shown, the 'sitz im Leben' of Matthew's ekklēsia is evidently its worship life and 'this-worldly' or sociological and political circumstances. The Sermon on the Mount also provides an understanding of the ekklēsia. Davies suggests that "the Sermon on the Mount is the protest of Matthew and his Church against the substitution of speculation, ecstasy and esoteric knowledge for morality."¹

The ekklēsia has been introduced previously as a company of disciples which exercises a right of binding and loosing, of legislating conduct (18:18).² The members of the ekklēsia stand under the authority of the New Moses. Their relationship to this New Moses has implications for the life in the community. The community of the ekklēsia is ordered by Christ and in that sense differs from other religious communities of Judaism such as the synagogue and the Qumran sect.

Ekklēsia, the Synagogue and the Qumran sect. When a comparison is made between the Matthean ekklēsia, the synagogue and the qumran sect for example it can be observed that the ekklēsia of Matthew 18 does not exhibit the highly organized and legalistic structure of the latter. It could well be that the qumran community had an influence (negative or

¹See 13:52; 23:8; 28:20; W. D. Davies, The Sermon on the Mount (Cambridge: University Press, 1969), p. 68.

²Ibid., p. 27.

positive) upon Matthew's formulation of his ekklēsia. As far as the synagogue and the qumran sect are concerned, many of these sectarians could have joined the Church after A.D. 68, as Davies suggests.¹ Davies also cites Stendhal who has made a comparison between the Matthean quotations of Scripture and those in the Dead Sea writings. In the words of Davies, Stendhal "claims that Matthew emerged from a school of interpreters who employed methods of exegesis similar to those employed at Qumran."²

This partly explains why there are blocks of material "where sectarian influences break through in Matthew."³ Davies goes on to cite five such passages dealing with Matthew's understanding of the ekklēsia.⁴ However, the Dead Sea sect is shown to lack many of the unique Christian elements of Matthew's ekklēsia, even though the parallels cannot be denied.⁵

The Dead Sea sect, in making remnant claims for itself, exhibited some sectarian attitudes which set it against the rest of the nation. Its programme was exclusivist and separatist. It taught that only a fraction of Israel had remained true to God and could call themselves Israel. Its exclusiveness prevented it from having any interest in anyone outside Israel, for its mission was to preserve the religion of Israel in its purity. The sect of the Pharisees, the faithful within the nation, emphasizes the same idea.

¹Ibid., p. 77.

²Ibid., p. 78. ³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., pp. 78-9; 13:24-30; 13:47-50; 16:17-19; 18:15-20; 28:16-20. Other materials are in the sermon on the Mount; see pp. 81-3.

⁵There is possible interaction between the sectarians and the ekklēsia. The impact of the former could have affected the growth of the organization of the Church.

As far as Matthew is concerned he seems to be aware of these sectarian motifs. But as he uses them, he breaks them down and transforms them. He sets the Christian ekklēsia over against the synagogue (cf. 5:13-16; 6:1-4, 5; 11:27-30). The Christian community is the salt of the earth, the light of the world. It stands in antithesis to Judaism. In the beatitudes it seems that Matthew is counteracting all that Judaism stands for. The ethical demands of Jesus are set over against those of the Jew.¹ The life and prayer of the Christian community stand over against the practices of the Synagogue (6:1-5). The Lord's Supper contrasts with the Synagogal prayer. As a teacher Jesus surpasses by far the scribal tradition of teaching (7:29). In 11:27-30 the yoke of Christ is set over against the yoke of Jewish law.² The Synagogue is for the Jews but the ekklēsia is called to the end of the world.

Church organization in Matthew 18. Are there any authority figures in the ekklēsia of Matthew? In the section 18:15-20 and 18:21-35 Jesus deals with the actual life of the ekklēsia. What should characterize the ekklēsia is a practical application of the law of 'binding and loosing'. The community of the ekklēsia appears as a very democratic community where no individual member holds a position of authority or supremacy over the whole community. In the ekklēsia there is freedom of action from the whole community both in allowing certain things to be done and in forbidding others. Here the words of Jesus appear as the law of the community. This law is the law of love, forgiveness, and long-suffering toward the wrongdoer. When a disciplinary case is brought before the

¹Six times in 5:21; 48 Jesus uses the antithesis "you have heard it was said . . . but I say unto you."

²See Davies, pp. 85-8.

ekklēsia, it is the prerogative of the whole community, not of a selected individual or group of individuals, to exercise authority and discipline.

The ekklēsia that Matthew envisages does not have authority figures. Though there is individual initiative in dealing with some practical issues of the Church life, such as discipline, final decision is the privilege of the whole ekklēsia, that is, all the members.

Ekklēsia in the Rest of the New Testament

It is important to note that the Christian Church did not describe itself as a sunagogē.¹ Far as Coenen suggests "the name synagogue which was originally a technical term for the Jewish assembly came to be regarded in time as the 'symbol of the Jewish religion of law and tradition'."²

Ekklēsia in Acts

In the Acts of the Apostles the word is used twenty-three times. It is used to refer to believers in a single locality as well as to believers everywhere. Thus it can refer to the Jerusalem Church (5:11; 7:38; 8:1, 3). The people of Israel in the wilderness are called an ekklēsia (7:38). There is also an ekklēsia of Judea, Galilee and Samaria (9:31).³ Reference is made of the ekklēsia at Antioch (11:26; 13:1; 14:27; 15:3), at Caesarea (18:22), and at Ephesus (20:17, 28).⁴ In 20:28

¹Coenen, pp. 296-7; exception in James 2:2.

²Ibid., p. 297.

³In 9:31 and 15:41 some textual traditions have ekklēsia in the plural,

⁴Here there is a predominant use of the singular.

it implicitly appears that it is God who gathers His people together and those who are His belong to the ekklēsia.

Ekklēsia and the Remnant Motif in Acts. It is evident that in the first five chapters of Acts the word ekklēsia does not occur until 5:11. We are given a portrayal of the earliest Christian Community. This community saw itself as a remnant within Israel.

Peter's Pentecost sermon (Chapter 2) is addressed to the Jews only. Here he builds heavily on Joel 2:28-32, the last Old Testament text on the remnant. Peter addresses his hearers to join Israel and to save themselves from this corrupt generation (2:40). These earliest Christians saw themselves as a remnant, a congregation of the end of the day who await the imminent reign of God (1:6). For them baptism meant a bath of purification which protects one from the coming fire storm. They saw themselves as within the bounds of Judaism and they remained loyal to the temple cult. Their communal meal suggested the last day gladness and they devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of the bread, to prayer and praise. There was no needy in their midst for they shared everything. They understood the promise of the Messiah as applying only to themselves (2:39; 3:20-23) and therefore were not conscious of any world mission. Rather they saw their mission as being to the people of Israel, the offspring of Abraham.

However from chapter six onwards there is a consciousness of a development of the self-understanding of the ekklēsia. The early Christians gradually came to understand themselves not in terms of a remnant but in the terms of an ekklēsia under the guidance of the Spirit of Christ. Now they are no longer confined to the boundaries of Israel, they are scattered all over the world. The illustration of Paul's collection

appears as a climax of the struggle over the acceptance of Gentiles by Jews as fellow-heirs. The Gentile Christians need not to become Jews as they enter the community. There has been a movement from Jewish exclusivism to universalism, from temple cult to world wide mission, from remnant to ekklēsia.

It is rather interesting to note how Paul in Acts 20:28 uses the language of Ps 74:2. As he adopts it he adapts it. The original word used is edhah which the LXX rendered by sunagogē. Paul replaces the LXX sunagogē by ekklēsia as well as the verb 'acquired' (ektesō) by 'purchased' (periepoiesatō). The word 'redeemed' is reinforced by the mention of blood. The text of Ps 74:2 refers to the congregation of suffering Israel. The Psalmist here appeals to God on behalf of the congregation, reminding Him of what He had purchased for Israel in times of old, to make them a peculiar people--His people.

In taking over this language, Paul is making a parallel between God's purchasing of Israel and the purchasing of a new congregation through the blood of Christ; the ekklēsia. The word that Paul uses belongs already to an established history; that of the people of Israel. Then Paul administers to the word ekklēsia its primary meaning of congregation whose unity is carried out in the joint action of many members, Jews and Gentiles, under the supervision of the Holy Spirit.

In summary the ekklēsia of Acts has moved from being an exclusive community to being a community of salvation for both Jews and Gentiles. The self-understanding of the early Christians moved from Jewish sectarianism to an open community, from remnant to ekklēsia, from Jerusalem to Samaria and Antioch and Rome. The ekklēsia of Acts goes far beyond the boundaries of Israel. It knows no historical, biological or religious barriers, for it is created by God's Spirit who in Christ has set out to save the whole world, both Jews and Gentiles.

Ekklēsia in the Pauline epistles and Revelation.

The word ekklēsia is primarily used in Paul's letters.¹ It appears about forty-six times in his letters, but does not occur in 1 and 2 Peter, 2 Timothy and Titus. There are only isolated occurrences in James and Hebrews. The term is also used in 3 John and appears twenty times in Revelation.²

Paul speaks on various occasions of the ekklēsia in the plural.³ Sometimes also the word is used from singular to plural and vice versa; sometimes the article is used, sometimes it is omitted.

Paul has a fondness for adding tou Theou to ekklēsia.⁴ In the ekklēsia God acts en Christō (Gal 1:22; 1 Thess 2:14). The ekklēsia is the assembly of God in Christ, or of Jesus Christ (Rom 16:16).

In the epistles and Revelation the ekklēsia applies to a number of assemblies which can be summarized as follows:

(1) ekklēsia (singular with the article) refers to the mother ekklēsia of Jerusalem.⁵

(2) ekklēsia (singular with article) is the community in a particular locality ie. Cenchrea (Rom 16:1), Corinth (1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1), Laodicea (Col 4:16), Thessalonica (1 and 2 Thess 1:1), Galatia (1 Cor 16:1; Gal 1:22), Macedonia (2 Cor 8:1) or Judaea (Gal 1:22).

¹The writer considers Pauline the following: Romans 1 and 2, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.

²See Schmidt, p. 504.

³About twenty times; ie. Rom 16:4, 16; 1 Cor 11:16; 14:32; 2 Cor 8:18; 12:13; Gal 1:2, 22.

⁴1 Cor 10:32; 11:22; 15:9; Gal 1:13, 22; 1 Thess 2:14; 1 Tim 3:5, 15,

⁵1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13; Phil 3:6.

(3) ekklēsia (singular with article) refers to the individual ekklēsia of a city.¹

(4) ekklēsia (singular without article) is any individual ekklesia.²

(5) ekklēsia are many ekklesiae of a region, ie. Judaea (Gal 1:22; 1 Thess 2:14), Galatia (1 Cor 16:1), Macedonia (2 Cor 8:1), Asia (1 Cor 16:19; Rev 1:4).

(6) ekklēsiai (plural) refers to various ekklēsiai not of a definite region.³

(7) ekklēsiai (plural, usually with pasai, loipai, tou Theou) refers to individual ekklēsiai.⁴

(8) ekklēsia (singular) stands for a domestic, house ekklēsia.

(9) ekklēsia (singular) refers to the ekklēsia of God (1 Cor 10:32; 11:22).

(10) ekklēsia (singular) refers to the Universal Church under the headship of Christ.⁵

Ekklēsia is also used to refer to the assembly of an ekklēsia and thus contains the original meaning of qahal.⁶ Also, it is important to point out that: "the sum of the individual congregations does not produce the total community or the Church. Each community, however

¹Rom 16:23; 1 Cor 6:4; 15:5, 12, 33; 1 Tim 5:16; 3 John 9, 10.

²1 Cor 4:17; 14:4; 1 Tim 3:5.

³Rom 16:16; 2 Cor 8:33; 11:8.

⁴1 Cor 7:17; 11:16; 14:23; 2 Cor 8:18, 24; 11:28; 2 Thess 1:4.

⁵Eph 1:22; 3:10, 21; 5:23-32; Col 1:18, 24.

⁶John 6:59; 18:20; 1 Cor 11:18; 14:19, 28; 14:34.

small, represents the total community, the Church."¹ Each belongs to and lives in the new creation through the word of Christ.

In his individual letters to the Churches Paul uses ekklēsia with different emphasis. For him to enter the ekklēsia is to receive the proclamation of Christ in faith and to receive a calling from God. Through the call of God an assembly is brought together. This is the basic idea of qahal.

Whether the ekklēsia is used in the singular or the plural, with or without the article, the important thing is that it testifies to the presence of Christ within itself. For Paul there can exist only one ekklēsia because there is only one Lord. At baptism one enters into the ekklēsia and shares its fellowship.

The ekklēsia is the sphere of constantly repeated events of the worship of God. It is not static; repeatedly, there is a coming together in fellowship. It is not isolated or disconnected but it is a unified and wholistic community,² that meets in faith as a response to God's call. Küng rightly states:

The ekklēsia is, in spite of institutionalistic misconceptions, the fellowship of believers; it is also, in spite of mistaken religio-sociological ideas the foundation and creation of the God who calls: the congregatio fidelium only exists as con-vocatio Dei, the communio sanctorum only exists as con-vocatio Dei,³ the communio sanctorum only exists as institutio Dei.³

Local and Universal Church. Whether Paul speaks of the local Churches, house Churches,⁴ or the ekklēsia as a whole,⁵ he describes

¹Schmidt, p. 506. See 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 2:1; also Küng, p. 85.

²Küng, p. 84. ³Ibid., p. 86.

⁴Cf. Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15, 16, etc.

⁵Cf. 1 Cor 10:32; 11:22; 15:9; Gal 1:13; Eph 1:22; 3:10, 21; 5: 23-32.

the Church in its totality. There is a reality of wholeness in the local Church precisely because it is the Church of God.¹ Each local Church is under the lordship of Christ: each is a theocracy precisely because it is ruled by God. In that sense, as Stagg suggests: "local Churches are autonomous in that each, being a whole, may function as a whole."²

With regard to the relationship between individual Church and universal Church and to the question: which is primary, Stagg is again correct when he says that "the New Testament thought is first for the whole ekklēsia, then for the same whole ekklēsia as it is manifest in a given place,"³ or "the autonomy of the local Church is rooted in the fact that a local Church is the Church, Christ is in it, and it is his body. Paradoxically, the whole is present in the part."⁴ Each local Church or gathering is a manifestation of the people of God in general.⁵

The universal Church is not a secondary concept to Paul.

Ridderbos pertinently says:

For if the concept of the ekklēsia tou Theou has above all a redemptive-historical content and speaks of the Church as the true people of God, the manifestation of the (Messianic) congregation of the great future, then it is clear that for Paul, not only in Ephesians and Colossians but in all his preaching, the thought of the universal Church is primary and the local Church, the house Church, and the Church gathering can be denoted as ekklēsia, because the universal ekklēsia is revealed and represented in them.⁶

¹Cf. 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1; 1 Thess 2:14; 2 Thess 1:4; 1 Tim 3:5.

²Frank Stagg, New Testament Theology (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1962), p. 192.

³Ibid. ⁴Ibid.

⁵H. Ridderbos, Paul an Outline of His Theology, trans. John Richard De Witt (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), p. 330; In Ephesians and Colossians ekklēsia is exclusively used of the Church in general while elsewhere Paul speaks of the local Church or Church gathering.

⁶Ibid.

Ekklēsia in the rest of the New Testament and the Remnant Motif.

In Paul's writings and in Revelation in particular there is a consciousness of a remnant. As far as Paul is concerned he establishes the fact that those who are the remnant of Israel are those natural Jews who accept the works of God wrought in Jesus of Nazareth and who find their righteousness by faith (Rom 9-11). However they do not constitute the final remnant, though an essential part of it, for God's intention is that all those who are to be saved are saved. This intention is hidden in the mystery that the Gentiles cannot be saved without the Jews nor can the Jews be saved without the Gentiles. Both constitute the ekklēsia, the new people that God has called and created.

Furthermore an element of the remnant motif is found in Paul's idea of the seed. For him Christ is the seed of Abraham (Gal 3:16), God's remnant, the one who is utterly faithful and holy, and who assures the survival of the race against the catastrophe of sin. As God's seed Christ has broken down the barriers within mankind and has called His people into the ekklēsia. There There is no Jew nor Greek, no free nor slave, no male nor female, all are one in Christ (Gal 3:28), and thus are sons of God (v. 26). All those who are baptized into Christ form His ekklēsia, the community of the seed (v. 29).

It is only as it belongs to Christ that the community is the seed, and thus provides a bridge across the chasm of sin. As it discovers itself in Christ the ekklēsia becomes "an eschatological entity from which the new community of the future springs forth,"¹ and "through

¹Gerhard F. Hasel, The Remnant. The History and Théology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah, 2d ed. (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1972), p. 257.

which continuity between the past and the future is preserved."¹ As such the ekklēsia contains the eschatological laos of God which gathers around Christ who will emerge from the future catastrophe and assure the survival of the human race.

The motif of the remnant runs through the book of Revelation. The remnants of Revelation appear to be a community that keeps the commandments of God and has the faith of Jesus (12:17). These remnants find their 'sitz im Leben' in the time of the final war between Good and Evil, God's people and Babylon, God and Satan (chaps. 14; 16 and 19). If Satan should prevail and succeed, then there is no potential of survival for God's people, nor for the human race. But Christ is depicted as descending at the head of the victorious heavenly army to deliver those who have total allegiance to God and remain utterly faithful to God's commandments and saving deed in Christ in the midst of persecution and sin.

Images of the Church

The New Testament gives no formal definition of the ekklēsia. It speaks of certain broad themes to express the relationship of the believers to Christ and to one another.

Striking images of the ekklēsia are used by various New Testament writers to give colour and accent to the ekklēsia, to awaken a perception and reality of it, and to give a self-understanding of the ekklēsia itself.² No single image can in itself give us a full perception of the reality of the ekklēsia. However, each image is complete in itself and

¹ Ibid., p. 270.

² Paul S. Minear, Images of the Church in the New Testament (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), pp. 22-24.

when placed alongside other images it serves to aptly portray the cohesion of the ekklēsia as an authentic reality. Some images are more vivid than others and there is the danger of distorting the Biblical concept of the ekklēsia by stressing only one image to the exclusion of the rest. For each image is designed to stress a certain truth about the nature of the Church: therefore each is necessary for a full expression of the Church's self-understanding.

It is estimated that there are about one hundred images of the Church.¹ Some of them are minor or peripheral: others are of major importance. Some "relate the Church to its background in the covenant history of Israel,"² others set it in "a universal and cosmic context."³

Among the images that Minear considers as minor are the following: the salt of the earth (Matt 5:13); a letter from Christ (2 Cor 3:2-3); fish and fish net (Mark 1:17; Matt 4:19); the boat (Matt 8:23-27), the ark (Matt 24:36-42; Luke 17:26-37); unleavened bread (1 Cor 5:7) etc.⁴

It is important to note also that some of the images (such as that of the people of God, the creation, the fellowship in faith,) bring out the concept that the Church is the people of God, that God is active in creating a new humanity with a genuine cosmic beginning, vocation and destiny, and that the Church is a community of fellowship characterized by a mutuality in gift and in vocation.⁵

The image of the body of Christ will be dealt with more extensively in the next Chapter for it seems to give an encompassing expression of the Church. However it must be viewed in the context of these

¹ Minear, Images of the Church, p. 28.

² Ibid., p. 105. ³ Ibid. ⁴ Ibid., pp. 29-65.

⁵ Ibid., p. 67. See Acts 26:18; 2 Cor 5:17; Eph 4:12; 1 Pet 2:9-10; 4:17.

other pictures. As Minear says, "image after image points beyond itself to a realm in which God and Jesus Christ and the Spirit are at work,"¹ and "whatever the figure of speech, this society [early Church] knew itself to be a Messianic community belonging to and dwelling in a living Jesus Christ whose sovereign rule marked the beginning and the goal of the new age,"²

Ekklēsia and Israel

Turning from a brief consideration of the word ekklēsia, it is now appropriate to inquire what the New Testament says about the relationship of the ekklēsia to Israel. Is the New Testament ekklēsia a continuation or a replacement of Israel? Does the ekklēsia stand alongside Israel or does it displace Israel?

The question of the relationship of the ekklēsia to Israel is a complex matter. One has on the one hand, to grapple with the redemptive-historical transition from historical Israel, the historical people of God to whom God gave His promises, to the Church; and on the other hand to grapple with the rejection of Israel through an unbelief which placed it outside the divine promise made to Abraham and his descendants.³

The Old Testament openly faces the fact of apostasy of the majority of Israel. There is a repeated affirmation of the hardening of the people of God's election from which the idea of the remnant emerges. This remnant is constituted of the righteous few who survive the nation's religious crisis. In this remnant idea there is also evidence of Israel's expectation of the Messiah (Isa 11:1, 10-11; Jer 23:3-6; Mic 5:2-9).

¹Ibid., p. 223.

²Ibid., p. 224. ³Ridderbos, p. 334.

The New Testament writers take over this idea and develop it further. For instance Jesus is presented in the Gospels as the true representative of Israel, utterly faithful and obedient. He suffers the catastrophe of rejection and death which result from Israel's apostasy. In Him all Israel's prophetic, priestly and kingly history finally comes to a climax,¹ and God's people emerge anew in the ekklēsia that is the living embodiment of His Messiahship. As Daane writes:

Thus Jesus' election is both dependent on Israel's election and a fulfilment of it. The goal toward which Israel's election and its required special service was directed was achieved and fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and history in the Old Testament sense came to an end. The eschatological end of Israel's election was reached in the reality of Jesus as the Christ; after the end is reached all things become new.²

Therefore the person of Jesus is essential for an understanding of the relationship of the ekklēsia to Israel. For in Him God has stepped into the world and human history so as to make the future a present reality. In Christ's life His disciples are transformed into children of God, and the life they live is a life before God in His service and in the service of the world.

The Gospel of John in particular indicates that Jesus had fulfilled Israel's election. In John 15:1 Jesus claims to be the true (alēthinē) vine, the actual and true Israel. Those who are united in Him bear natural fruit (vv. 1-8). Here God's purpose in creating Israel as a fruit bearing nation is realized in Christ. There is a consciousness that Jesus came to create a fellowship of persons under God's

¹ James Daane, The Freedom of God. A Study of Election and Pulpit (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973), pp. 129 ff.

² Ibid., p. 122.

kingship. The idea of the ekklēsia may well be present in the picture of the union of the branches with the vine.¹

Paul, too, considers the relationship of the Ekklēsia to Israel, particularly with respect to the redemptive-historical transition of the idea of the people of God. Ridderbos pertinently indicates three different points of view found in Paul's letters with regard to this transition:

1. "In the foreground is the new--that is to say, as given with the revelation of Christ--definition of the essence of the people of God, which may be expressed in terms of the New Covenant.

2. "This new definition at the same time represents the real nature of Israel's election and the content of God's purpose with respect to his people,

3. "This new definition does not exclude continuing concern with historical Israel; the latter, even in spite of its fulfilment as the once chosen people of God remains involved in the fulfilment of his promises,"²

The strong emphasis of this new definition, as Ridderbos suggests, is that from the beginning God had the intention of the calling and formation of Israel as His people.³ This calling and creation transcends all legalistic, national, biological and particularistic definitions of Israel as God's people, and opens up the prospect of a spiritual and universal communion grounded in faith in Christ.⁴ Thus, for Paul, the mystery of the ekklēsia derives from the purpose of God in Christ that

¹ Cf. Paul's analogy of the body and its members.

² Ridderbos, p. 334.

³ Ibid., p. 341.

⁴ Ibid.

"the Gentiles should become heirs and partakers of all the spiritual blessings that belong to Israel by virtue of her election."¹

The secret of Israel's election is found in Abraham's calling and election,² which contained all the prerogatives and privileges of Israel.³ The theme of Romans 4 for example heightens Abraham's status as forefather of Israel (v. 1). God's promises were made to believing Abraham. As such he is the father of Israel whom God has called. The same idea is present in Galatians 3:15 ff. However, Paul interprets the seed of Abraham as Christ (v. 16). Therefore all those who believe in Christ and who are baptized into Him are the seed of Abraham and heirs according to the promise (vv. 27-29). Similarly for Paul a true Jew is one who is in secret, and circumcision is that which takes place in the heart by the Spirit of God (Rom 2:28, 29). From this idea Paul defines the essence of God's people.

The blood of Christ on the cross, upon which the New Covenant is grounded, is the constitutive factor in the essence of the people of God. As Ridderbos reflects . . . "for Paul the promise of the New Covenant is one of the great supports of his spiritual and universal definition of the Church as the people of God and Israel."⁴

In Romans

Romans 2:28-29

Reflecting on Deut 10:16; 30:6 and Jer 4:4; 9:26, Paul draws a distinction between a Jew (to all outward appearances) and a Jew (inwardly) and claims, as already pointed out, that the true Jew is the person who is

¹Daane, p. 134, ²Ridderbos, p. 342,

³Ibid, ⁴Ibid., p. 335,

inwardly a Jew.¹ Paul also draws a similar distinction between a physical or manual circumcision and spiritual circumcision of the heart, the latter being the work of the Spirit.² Ridderbos says: . . . "being a Jew and being circumcised acquired a purely spiritual significance, and the natural and empirical factors are not even taken into account any longer."³

The spiritual dimension constitutes the real content of the New Covenant which Christ fulfilled and the promises and privileges of which are passed over to the ekklēsia.⁴ Members of the ekklēsia are heirs of the Kingdom of God,⁵ heirs according to the promise (Gal 3:29; 4:7): they come to share in the inheritance promised to Abraham.⁶

There is therefore a radicalizing of the concept of Israel or Jew. The name of Christ makes those who are true Jews or the people of God, those who receive the circumcision of the Spirit.⁷ True Jewishness is manifested in the ekklēsia. It is not a distinctive and mechanical mark but rather a fulfilment of God's commandments in the New Covenant. As Ridderbos says: "For Paul the promise of the New Covenant is one of

¹ C. E. B. Cranfield, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, The International Critical Commentary, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975) 1: 175.

² Ibid. ³ Ridderbos, p. 335.

⁴ Ibid., p. 336. The promise of the New Covenant is a great support of Paul's spiritual and universal definition of the Church as God's people.

⁵ 1 Cor 6:9, 10; 15:50; Gal 5:21.

⁶ Rom 8:17; cf. 4:13; Eph 1:5; Col 1:2.

⁷ Rom 2:28, 29; cf. Deut 10:16; Jer 4:4.

the great supports of his spiritual and universal definitions of the Church as the people of God and the new Israel."¹

In the blood of Christ which is the basis of the New Covenant the ekklēsia shares in the varied designation of Israel in an apocalyptic way with regard to the eschatological dimension of its calling and creation.

Romans 3:1-4

Here Paul poses the question of the credibility of God.² He states that through Israel's election God has made a Covenant with mankind. But this fact does not nullify the possibility of Israel's failure to trust God's word though "they alone have been the recipients on behalf of mankind of God's message to mankind."³ Israel's unfaithfulness to God's Covenant would mean Israel's subsequent judgment by God.

However, despite Israel's unbelief and obduracy God is faithful to His Covenant made with Israel, He is righteous over against this sinful people and mankind in general.⁴

Romans 9-11

In Romans 9-11 the relation between Church and Israel is further discussed. Here also there is found "an interpretation of the Old Testament that allows Israel to retain a special position in the time of the New Covenant."⁵

¹Ibid. In the Supper the ekklēsia participates in the New Covenant; cf. 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6 ff.

²Cranfield, p. 177. ³Ibid., p. 119. ⁴Ibid., p. 183.

⁵Johannes Munck, Christ and Israel. An Interpretation of Romans 9-11, forward by Krister Stendahl (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), p. 15.

While the earliest Christians believed that the mission of the Church was to preach the Gospel to Israel, and that Israel's acceptance of the Messiah would also determine the incorporation and salvation of the Gentiles, Paul on account of Israel's unbelief does the reverse. He sees the mission to the Gentiles as a prominent reality and expression of the will of God. Salvation for him should come first to the Gentiles, then to the Jews.

The Gospels give evidence of the idea that a privileged position was offered to Israel, but because of Israel's abduracy God's judgment awaits them.¹ However they do not seem to express, as in Rom 9-11, the idea that in spite of their rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah Israel is yet to be saved.

For Paul Israel cannot claim salvation as a right (9:6-13). Salvation is a prerogative of God alone (9:14-21). However God has acknowledged a remnant of Israel and the Gentiles (9:22-29). Since Israel rejected God's salvation in Christ (10:14, 21) the Gentiles have been chosen recipients of God's grace through faith and confession of the lips (9:20-10:13). But the will of God is not that Israel should fall, for He has called a remnant (11:1-10). In fact God's plan is that the salvation of the Gentiles shall in time bring forth that of Israel (11:11-27). God works through disobedience and then mercy and then saves all men (11:28-32).²

As evident from 9:1-5 Paul's goal is the renewal of the Israel of God.³ All the benefits mentioned in verses 4 and 5 are an evidence

¹ See Jesus' parable of the fig tree (Israel) in Luke 13:6-9, and his symbolic treatment of the fig tree (Israel) in Matt 21:18-22.

² See Munck, p. 25.

³ Marcus Barth, Israel and the Church (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1969), p. 68.

that Israel has been and is still selected to be the personal witness of God's Covenant among the Gentiles.¹ But it is Christ the Messiah who fulfills all Israel's promises.

Because of their guilt Israel is without excuse for they obstinately rejected God's grace (cf. Deut 32:31; Isa 65:1, 2). To this situation God responds with unwearrying persistence and graciousness,² in creating and electing a chosen people through the birth of new sons of promise.³ Israel who was fitted for destruction is now spared (9:22-24). Here the practical effect of God's call of grace is expressed in the calling, not only of some from Israel, but also of some among the Gentiles. God's promises have not lapsed for a remnant of Israel shall be saved.

In fact Paul gives assurance that the exclusion of the majority of Israel is not going to last forever (11:11-24). The mystery of the divine plan concerns both Jews and Gentiles (11:25-32). God has made it possible for a remnant to stand firm and this, by His own decision, for His own purpose, in order to give evidence of His continuing interest in, and care for Israel as His elect.⁴

The simile of the olive tree (16-24) illustrates clearly the relationship between the ekklēsia and Israel. The situation of Israel is not final and unalterable.⁵ The fall of Israel implies the salvation of the Gentiles, which, when achieved, is to effect that of Israel (v 11). The Gentiles are inserted into the holy root. Their adoption is by sheer grace: therefore they should not boast of their new position upon the

¹Ibid. ²Cranfield, 2: 506. ³Munck, p. 37, n.32.

⁴Cranfield, 2: 547-8.

⁵Munck, p. 116.

sacred root (v 18). Their belonging to God's people is a participation in the history of Israel.¹

In Ephesians

The epistle to the Ephesians gives also a rich description of the relationship between ekklēsia and Israel. From a portrayal of Christ's person and function Paul proceeds to describe the Ephesian community. The Church has its existence in the eternal plan of God in Christ (1:4 ff) which God executed and proclaimed in the fullness of time (1:10; 2: 13 ff).

The Gentile-Christians of the community together with Israel were by nature "Children of Wrath" (2:3). But now they have become 'fellow-citizens' with the saints and members of the household of God (2:19), 'fellow-heirs' (3:6) through the bond of peace (4:3).

The theme of Jewish-Gentile unity runs through the epistle. It is also expressed in Galatians (2:11-21; 3:26-29), but seems to find its climax in Ephesians. Here Paul does not envisage the Gentile-Christians as separated from their Jewish counterparts. The Gentiles who were yet without hope are now grounded on the foundation of Israel--the people who had a firm hope and a covenantal history (2:1-10). This has been made possible through the Messiah who destroyed all the social and historical differences between Jews and Gentiles. The effect of Christ's death lies in the acceptance of the Gentiles into the citizenry of Israel, the people of God.² "Gentiles are now fellow citizens and heirs and are given equal rights with Israel who always had been God's people and partakers of His life."³

¹Barth, p. 73. ²Barth, p. 74.

³Ibid., See Eph 2:6; 3:6; 4:8.

Both Gentiles and Israel were members of the body of Christ (2: 15; 3:6). Paul here regards the Church and Israel as two separate entities, he does not say that the Church is God's people at the expense of Israel. In fact he teaches that to be a member of the new humanity in Christ is to belong to Israel, to be 'joined together', 'built in', 'knitted together' with them (2:21; 4:16). Marcus Barth rightly says: "brotherhood with Israel is the very essence, not the possible consequence, of the peace Christ has made."¹ However, when Paul speaks of the oneness of Jews and Gentiles in Christ, a oneness that transcends national, social, cultural and racial preconditions² and which is perfected in the love of God and of one's fellow man (cf. Rom 5:5), he shows the priority of Israel in such expressions as 'the Jew first, and the Greek'.

The phrase, 'there is no other God apart from the God of Israel', has lost its particularism to express a universalistic thought that the God of Israel is also the God of the Gentiles.

In Summary the relationship between ekklēsia and Israel has a redemptive-historical framework. It is universal and particular. The Church has its source in Israel, at the same time it takes the place of Israel as the historical people of God. Having its basis in the New Covenant, the ekklēsia finds itself in the line of Israel with whom God's purpose to bring history to an end began.

In the cross of Christ the ekklēsia finds its reality--a reality that transcends any natural, biological or national grounds, for in Christ

¹ Ibid., p. 92.

² Ibid, See 1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:28; Col 3:11.

God gathers all humanity around Himself in His purpose to save all men. The ekklēsia of the New Testament breaks through the particularism of Israel.

The New Testament adds a new spiritual concept to the Church. In reality Christ is the Corner Stone of the ekklēsia and as such makes it a spiritual and universal communion where all the legalistic and particularistic elements of Israel no longer are found. In that context the ekklēsia stands in total opposition to Israel. As in Abraham's election was the calling and creation of Israel so in Christ's election is the calling and creation of the ekklēsia. However the election of both Israel and the ekklēsia is grounded in God's own divine work, in the strength of His promise through the Spirit.

When Israel misjudged the nature of God's election and calling they experienced God's reprobation and hardening. This was in order that God may display His grace to the Gentiles to provoke Israel to repentance.

The election of the ekklēsia is according to God's foreknowledge (Rom 8:29; 11:2) and foreordination.¹ God has predestined us into sonship in Jesus Christ (Eph 1:5). It is at this point of belonging to Christ that the ekklēsia is the object of God's predestination.

Laos and ekklēsia

Ridderbos states the following: "the redemptive-historical significance of the New Testament Church as the people of God already finds clear expression in its most prevalent name, ekklēsia."² The New Testament ekklēsia is laos in the sense that laos loses its exclusivistic,

¹ See Rom 8:20, 29; 1 Cor 2:7; Eph 1:5.

² Ridderbos, p. 328.

particularistic and religious character

In the Greek Jewish writings (Sirach, Psalms of Solomon, Philo) ekklēsia is used to denote Israel as the people of God.¹ The LXX has also ascribed to the ekklēsia the title of the Old Testament people of God--qahal Yahweh.²

There is a consciousness in Paul's frequent use of the qualification "ekklēsia tou Theou" that the Christian Church considered itself as the true people of God. The ekklēsia appears then as a fulfilment of all the covenant privileges, qualities and attributes that once belonged to Israel, the ancient laos of God. Paul made use of this application for He saw in the Messiah a fulfilment of all that Israel, the laos of God, stood for. He saw the Church as the qahal of the end of time (cf. Matt 16:18 ff.) which gathers all those who believe in Jesus Christ and have been baptized in Him.

In creating Israel as a laos, God's intention was that Israel could mediate between Him and the rest of mankind. Israel was not to be separated from the world, neither is the ekklēsia. The ekklēsia as a laos is called to live in somatic reality for the world. It is called to serve God and the community. The ekklēsia ceases to be a laos if it separates itself from the world and if it ceases to see its raison d'être in God's election,

Hagios, ekklēsia and laos

The description of the ekklēsia as the 'saints' (hagioi) was also used in an early Christian self-definition.³

¹Schmidt, pp. 527 ff, ²Ibid.

³See Acts 9:13, 32, 41; 26:10; Heb 3:1; 6:10; 13:24; Rev 5:8; 8:3, 4, etc.

In his epistles Paul takes over this early Christian usage, gives it more expression, and uses it as a customary designation of the ekklēsia. This designation is generally found at the introduction and conclusion of Paul's letters.¹ Ekklēsia and hagioi appear to be synonymous terms in these passages.

The term hagioi is also used to refer to the organic reality of believers in a congregational relationship.² Wherever a Christian Church was established, whether at Jerusalem or Antioch, the term came into effect.³

As the term ekklēsia is a harking back to the Old Testament laos, the use of the term hagioi for the ekklēsia is also a harking back to the designation of Israel as the laos of God. Owen E. Evans rightly expresses the thought that the saints of the New Testament ekklēsia "derive from the Old Testament concept of Israel as a Holy people of God, that is a people separated or marked off as belonging exclusively to Yahweh and worshipping Him alone,"⁴

In the ekklēsia there arises a new people of God within the old laos.⁵ In his historical sweep in Romans, Ephesians and Galatians in

¹Rom 1:7; 16:15; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1; 13:12; Eph 1:1; Phil 1:1; 4:21, 22; Col 1:2. See Ridderbos, p. 337.

²Ibid. See Rom 1:17; 8:27; 16:2; 1 Cor 6:1; Eph 1:15; 5:3; 6:18; Col 3:12.

³Paul does not distinguish between the hagioi of the mother Church and those of the missionary Church. For in each case holiness derives from Christ. See Rom 15:25; 1 Cor 16:1; 2 Cor 8:4; etc.

⁴Owen E. Evans, "New Wine in Old Wineskins: XIII. The Saints," Expository Times 86 (September 1975): 196.

Cf. Exod 19:6; Lev 11:44, 45; Heb 13:12 ff.; 1 Pet 1:16; 2:9.

particular Paul has burst all the national limits of the concept of the people of God and has equated it with the Church of Christ.¹ The new branches from the Gentiles have been engrafted onto the holy root (Rom 11:17) of Israel, the old laos of God. However Paul radicalizes the notion of the holy root. In Rom 15:12 Christ is spoken as the Holy root: He has given Himself to the ekklēsia in order to make her holy. The ekklēsia is thus sanctified both in its Jewish Christian trunk and in its Gentile branches.²

Members of the ekklēsia are hagioi because they belong to a community grounded in the sacrifice of Christ, having been chosen by God for his community (Col 3:12). For Paul members of the ekklēsia are not hagioi by nature, but by calling (Rom 1:6, 7; 1 Cor 1:2, 24; cf. Jude 1). They owe their membership to the call of God in Christ (Phil 1:1).

It is evident that when we deal with the term hagioi we are concerned with the birthright of Israel on the Deuteronomic pattern,³ However in Paul the concept receives greater strength. Paul envisages the ekklēsia with Israel as the people of God. At the same time he envisages a distinction from empirical Israel.⁴ There is a self-consciousness of the Christian community from its earliest beginning as the eschatological community.⁵

¹Otto Procksh, "Hagios," TDNT 1:106.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 107. See Deut 7:6; 14:2; 33:3; cf. Num 16:3; Ps 16:3; 34:10; 89:6.

⁴Ridderbos, p. 332.

⁵H. Conzelmann, An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament (London: CSM Press, 1969), pp. 34-36; R. Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, 2 vols. (London: SCM Press, 1952), 1:37 ff. See use of "ekklēsia tou Theou", "hoi ekklētoi", "hoi hagioi", etc.

The term hagios is applied to every member of the ekklēsia (Phil 4:21) who is ordained for a thusia zosa hagia tō Theō (Rom 12:1; 15:16) which is to be fulfilled in bodily service to God and the community. As hagioi the Christians stand before God and before the world. They are called to live a life that befits their calling in Christ (cf. Gal 5:15; cf. Col 1:4), therefore to live a moral life (1 Cor 7:34; cf. 1 Thess 3:13; 1 Pet 3:5).

The laos of the ekklēsia is a laos hagios which is concerned with the last time. It is eschatological and apocalyptic as it is grounded in the Messianic promise. Furthermore both laos and ekklēsia have a 'cultic basis, for both concepts are contained the idea of the people of God. However in the New Testament Paul in particular radicalizes the concept of hagios to refer to the ordinary life of the members of the ekklēsia in the world. The ekklēsia as hagia lives a holy life for God and the world and serves as priest to God bringing to Him the offering of the world. Having its basis in God through Christ the ekklēsia is a laos hagios.

Significance of the New Testament ekklēsia

The New Testament concept of the ekklēsia points to a reality which is pre-existent and post-existent.¹ Its nature and scope transcend all boundaries of time, space and culture. It belongs to the Kingdom of the Most High and therefore has an eternal purpose.

No human society can equate with the New Testament concept of the ekklēsia, for it transcends all that humanity stands for. Its existence is grounded in God's condescending love for a people who are

¹ Minear, Images of the Church, p. 259.

not His people.¹ In His death on the cross Christ called and created a fellowship in faith to be the witness of His redemption to the world.

The ekklēsia is not an end in itself. It is called to a mission of love and service to God and fellowmen. The ekklēsia cannot isolate itself from the world. This would be a distortion of its very calling and creation. Minear rightly says: . . . "the reality of the Church is slavery and servitude to him and this slavery is a mission to the lowest of men because it is a promise to them that love never fails."²

The New Testament ekklēsia is a historical entity in the sense in which history continues to have meaning due to the unique election of Christ. The Christ-event is the assurance that the New Age had dawned but is not yet consummated. Through the ekklēsia the world can now anticipate the escatological saving deed of God in the establishment of His Kingdom.

Any Church that fails to see its creation in God from a 'no people' to 'God's people' runs the risk of losing its self-identity and freedom. As a creation of God the ekklēsia is under the sovereign rule of God. It is a spiritual community in which life is experienced in a democratic and orderly fashion. As a community of God the ekklēsia is defined by Jesus as Messiah. Alan Richardson writes: "Because Christ is apostle, the Church is apostolic; because he is the High Priest, the Church is sacerdotal; because he is Servant, the Church is ministerial."³

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 260.

³Alan Richardson, Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament (London: SCM Press, 1958), p. 257.

The ekklēsia is the sphere of constantly repeated events of worship of God. It is a theocracy precisely because it is ruled by God, and it is as a whole that the ekklēsia must function. There is no individualism, no particularism in the ekklēsia. Every member of the ekklēsia is called by God into the community of Christ to form one body in Him and with one another. Every member is a shareholder (koinōnos) in the Spirit and in the manifold vocation of the ekklēsia. Every member of the ekklēsia is a member of the laos and as such is a priest and minister of the community together with other priests and ministers.

The sphere of the ekklēsia is the sphere of the world. The whole community is a priesthood that offers to God the offering of the world, and which is involved in a work of 'binding' and 'loosing'.

The New Testament ekklēsia appears as a link, a bridge between the past and the future. While it has a history behind itself, it is a radical manifestation of the new age. It is eschatological because of Christ's unique act in its creation. It is therefore messianic and apocalyptic for it is a part of God's final act of salvation in Christ. It is an assurance that God is in control and that He had created a people who will survive the catastrophe of sin.

CHAPTER III

THE EKKLĒSIA AS THE BODY OF CHRIST

Introduction

In order to better grasp the reality of the New Testament ekklēsia as the new people of God, it is vital to investigate one of its most crucial figures, that of the body of Christ. Of all the images of the Church in the New Testament, that of the body, which first appears in 1 Cor 10:16, offers the most dynamic, developed and all encompassing expression of its nature. For most Protestant writers the body concept is to be understood metaphorically, not literally or mystically,¹ and different views have emerged to explain the origin of this metaphor.²

¹E. Best, One Body in Christ (London: SPCK, 1955), pp. 83-93; Bultmann, I: 192-203; Ridderbos, pp. 362-95; and D. E. H. Whitely, The Theology of St Paul (Oxford: University Press, 1964), p. 192.

²The most prominent view traces the body image to Greek philosophical writings. Another view relates the image to roots in the Old Testament's idea of corporate solidarity. According to another view Paul's metaphor springs from the gnostic concept of 'primal' or 'pre-contaminated' man. A fourth view cites the Temple of Asclepius as an alternative source for Paul's body theology. See Best, pp. 83-93, 203-7; M. Barth, "A Chapter on the Church, the Body of Christ," Interpretation 12 (1958): 137-142; H. W. Wolf, Anthropology of the Old Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), pp. 214-22; W. Schmithals, The Office of the Apostle in the Early Church (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon, 1969), pp. 198-230; A. E. Hill, "The Temple of Asclepius: an alternative source for Paul's Body Theology," JBL 99 (September 1980): 437-9; and J. A. T. Robinson, The Body (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1961), pp. 56-8.

The body concept is explicitly developed in Paul's writings, and it is used to illustrate the reality of the ekklēsia as a living organism, a wholeness which moreover embraces a cosmic dimension. It is to be noted that the specific body illustration is restricted to the Corinthian, Ephesian and Colossian audiences. However a spectrum of stages of development is evident within Paul's epistles. Marcus Barth expresses this idea as follows: "Though different Pauline epistles in their use of the term 'body of Christ' show distinctly different emphases, they all speak of Christ after one and the same basic pattern."¹ This variety of meanings as Gardner suggests may well reflect differences in the problems met in the Churches which Paul ministered to, and also different stages of development of Paul's theology.²

Thus the parallelism found in 1 Cor 10:16 between the 'body of Christ' and the 'blood of Christ' implies that those who participate in the Supper do also participate in the 'body of Christ' as one body. Conzelmann writes: "the sacramental participation in Christ's body makes us into the body of Christ."³ Here the body of Christ carries two senses at once. The nature of the one bread constitutes 'one body' in that it as a whole represents a complete unity. Thus when believers participate in the elements of the supper they participate in the body which acts to unite them in one body.

¹Barth, pp. 140-1.

²Gardner, p. 140.

³Hans Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians. A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, trans. James W. Leitch; ed., George W. McRae. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 172.

In 1 Cor 12:12-27 the one body presents a twofold aspect of unity and diversity. The ekklēsia consists of an interdependent multiplicity of members who share a "solidarity or unity of destiny". According to Rom 12:4-5 there is within the body of Christ "unity despite diversity and diversity within unity". There is a relationship of Christians to Christ and to one another. In Ephesians and Colossians Christ is originally united to His Church being the "beginning" and the "first-born from the dead". In Colossians, in particular, Christ is portrayed in cosmic dimensions. He has supreme authority over it (Col 1:18, 24). He is kephalē huper panta (Eph 1:22, 23) filling the Church first as He fills and embraces all rule and authority, power and dominion in this age and the age to come. The Lordship of Christ is here described in terms of His relationship to the world at large--the whole cosmic order--and therefore breaks the two great divisions of humanity, Jew and Gentile. For in His incarnation and vicarious sufferings Christ has reconciled all nations to God. In Him the whole cosmos has been made into a single new humanity of which He is the Head. With Christ at its Head, the Church as the body is elevated to Christ's authority and receives cosmic dimensions. The use of 'body' in conjunction with 'head' in Colossians and Ephesians thus has particular significance.¹

Concept of the "Body of Christ"

The idea of the oneness of Christ and His people was given major stress by Jesus Himself throughout His ministry. However, Paul poured additional content into the idea in the analogy of the 'body of Christ'.

¹Henrick Schlier, "Kephale", TDNT 3: 675; See Eph 1:22 f; 4:15 f; 5:23; Col 1:18; 2:10; 2:19.

Sōma is an anthropological term that Paul uses to proclaim that the believers constitute a large unity, a people. In the highest sense sōma denotes for him man in his totality, man in relationship to himself, whose "existence is characterized by membership and participation."¹

The word sōma is important for an understanding of the concept of the 'body of Christ,' being the key that ties together all Paul's great themes. Robinson comments:

It is from the body of sin and death that we are delivered; it is through the body of Christ on the cross that we are saved; it is into His body the Church that we are incorporated; it is by His body in the Eucharist that this Community is sustained; it is in our new body that its new life has to be manifested; it is to a resurrection of this body to the likeness of His glorious body that we are destined.²

If the image of the body seems to be the key to Paul's New Testament Theology it may be pointed out that the explicit equation of the ekklēsia with the 'body of Christ' does not exclude other images. As has already been shown, the New Testament ekklēsia designates the fellowship of persons in Christ as the body of Christ, Koinōnia of the Spirit, Israel of God, elect race, flock, royal priesthood. It contains also the concepts of a holy nation, God's own people, seed of Abraham and so on.³ Therefore to fully and objectively understand the nature of the ekklēsia one needs to consider all of its designations and images. That is to say, in dealing with the concept of the 'body of Christ' we are not concerned with the total and full picture of the ekklēsia.

¹Ernest Käsemann, Perspectives on Paul (London: SCM Press 1971), p. 114.

²Robinson, p. 9.

³Frank Stagg, New Testament Theology (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1962), p. 170.

To emphasize only the concept of the body would be to distort the nature and scope of the ekklēsia and its biblical expression.

However, the theme of the 'body of Christ' is quite significant for a good appraisal of the ekklēsia and for an understanding of the New Testament concept of laos. The use of sōma in connection with ekklēsia is another evidence of the importance of the concept 'body of Christ'.¹

Amidst the debate among New Testament scholars concerning the nature of the body of Christ concept, it is vital to remember Kaseman's suggestion that:

The Pauline idea of the body of Christ is by no means equally obvious or immediately accessible at all periods. Like every concept, it has its historical situation, its "sitz im Leben," and can only be properly understood in this light.²

For John Robinson Paul's body concept could have derived from the Eucharist but, "however significant the Eucharist may have been for Paul's theology of the body, it is surely clear that it is not a complete explanation."³ He goes on to 1 Cor 15:1-11 to find much insight in Paul's Damascus conversion. He writes: "The appearance on which Paul's whole faith and apostleship was founded was the revelation of the resurrection body of Christ not as an individual, but as the Christian community."⁴ The probing question of Jesus: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" (Acts 9:4 f; 22:7 f; 26:14 f) leads Robinson to see an identity of the Church with Christ Himself, for in persecuting the Christians Paul was made to see that he was persecuting Christ.

¹Sōma is used 142 times in the New Testament and is connected with ekklēsia about thirty-one times. Also various expressions of the Church-body theme are used by Paul.

²"Kasemann, pp. 104-5.

³Robinson, p. 57. ⁴Ibid., p. 58.

Whether one understands the body concept according to the above or as a metaphor that elucidates mutual relationship within the Church, or understands the relationship between Christ and His Church to be taken literally or metaphorically, this mode of expression remains closely related to the idea of the ekklēsia being the eschatological people of God,¹ the true Israel, "a new creation in universal dimension."² Because it is an eschatological community, the ekklēsia enjoys the gifts of the Spirit.³ In it God's purpose to create a people for Himself, as revealed in the Old Testament, is brought into fruition. Davies writes: "It is no sporadic phenomenon, but the outcome of a long historic process stretching back to the call of Abraham or to the Exodus from Egypt or, if we prefer, before the creation of the world."⁴ For Ridderbos the body-concept "describes the christological mode of existence of the Church as the people of God; it speaks of the special bond with Christ that the Church has as the people of God and the new Israel."⁵

It is the understanding of the writer that the concept of the ekklēsia as the body of Christ is embedded in the concept of the relationship of Christ to the believers and the believers to Christ and one another. The believers of the ekklēsia are called to the body through the grace of God in Christ. As the body of Christ, the ekklēsia is Israel "purged and reconstituted."⁶ It is a new creation in Christ,

¹"Kasemann, p. 106.

²Ibid., p. 108.

³W. D. Davies, Christian Origins and Judaism (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1962), p. 231; See Acts 2:5 ff; 9:31; 15:28; 1 Cor 3:16; Gal 3:3-5; Eph 4:4; 1 Thess 1:5,

⁴Ibid. ⁵Ridderbos, p. 362.

⁶R. N. Flew, Jesus and His Church (London: Epworth Press, 1938), p. 88.

yet it is reconstituted, for "many will come from east and west and will sit at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 8:11). Thus, as the body of Christ, the ekklēsia lives in anticipation of the eschatological deliverance of the God of heaven who will bring history to an end and fulfil all the promises once made to the old biological Israel. Christ as the eis anthrōpos, the eschatological Adam, will shape the destiny of a whole mankind belonging to Him,¹ (Rom 5:12-21; 1 Cor 15:21, 45), and will establish the eschatological age of the Spirit.²

Because it belongs to this age and the age to come the New Testament laos which finds expression in the ekklēsia, belongs to the redemptive work of God in Christ, and as Ridderbos says, "has a priori significance, namely, as the people of God that in His saving activity God has placed on His side and which He intends to be the exemplification of His grace and redemption".³

Paul's use of the body of Christ for the ekklēsia gives expression to its real being and character as the continuation and fulfilment of the old covenant God made with Abraham.⁴ Here the redemptive-historical aspect of the ekklēsia in terms of continuation and fulfilment and its christological aspect in terms of the body of Christ constitute one single dimension. The salvation that God offers to the ekklēsia has a corporate reality. Members of the ekklēsia are called

¹Edward Schweizer, "Sōma," TDNT 7; 1072.

²The entire New Testament witnesses that with the Christ event: incarnation, life, ministry, death, resurrection, glorification, a new age, the age of the Spirit has dawned upon mankind.

³Ridderbos, p. 327.

⁴Ibid.

and created by God in the one body of Christ to be a fellowship of people with an already existing fellowship, that of Israel. It is in the fellowship of the people that God's salvation is received.¹

In the following pages the present thesis will concentrate on the christological aspect of the ekklēsia as it is expressed in the theme of the 'body of Christ'. This theme is of vital significance, for, as it has been already indicated, it provides a christological basis for the existence of the Church as God's laos.

It has also been pointed out that Paul's theme follows a development of stages. Kāsemann suggests that Paul "made use of the concept primarily in paraenesis and hence modified it in the direction of popular philosophical tradition, which described a political or cosmic entity as a body."² Kāsemann's suggestion may be proved relevant for the study of the body of Christ concept on 1 Corinthians, Romans, Colossians and Ephesians.

Body of Christ in 1 Corinthians and Romans

1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians 6:12-20. In order to grasp the significance of this passage it is vital to give a short summary of its "sitz im Leben". The community at Corinth has only recently become Christian. Apparently the believers have brought into the community their pagan influences and ideas. There is a certain inclination to go 'beyond' or 'over' the Scriptures as suggested in 1 Cor 4:6. But the tendency was not at this level. There was also a tendency to go beyond Paul himself and other Christians. The community of Corinth appears at first sight to be

¹Ibid. ²Kāsemann, p. 105.

infiltrated with gnostic enthusiasm and myth, sacramentalism and the catchword of knowledge and wisdom.¹ This state of ecstasy and enthusiasm finds the Corinthians under the grip of moral and religious disorders such as sexual freedom and the degeneration of the Lord's Supper.² The community seems to be divided through speculations, controversies and various schismata (11:8) regarding the relation of Christians to the world (chapters 8-10).

Paul seeks to illumine the existence of the Church and the individuals in it by stressing all that the members have already been given in Christ, such as sanctification (1:2), the grace of God (1:4), enrichment in all speech and all knowledge (1:5), any spiritual gift (1:7), and things given in order that they may be found guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ (1:8). The faithfulness of God is expressed in calling the Corinthians into the fellowship of His son Jesus Christ (1:9).

Thus, Paul's use of body in Corinthians seems to be a vehicle to express this situation in which the Corinthians find themselves at the moment, where the grace of God in Jesus Christ now reaches them. All the expressions of what the Corinthians are and what they have are located in Christ. Therefore every member of the Church, the strong, the weak, the married and the single finds his calling in where he stands and what he is.³ Man finds reality in his calling in Christ. As Paul says "in whatever state each was called, there let him remain with God" (7:23). For instance the slave who is called in the Lord is the Lord's freed man and the freed man who is called in Christ is the Lord's slave (7:22). Here Paul expresses the reality that man's standing is determined by his relation to Christ in faith. The cross event is constitutive of the

¹Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians, p. 14. ²Ibid. ³Ibid., p. 15.

believer's faith. As he has faith in Christ the believer stands under the reality of the cross. However the faith which is the basis of the believer's standing is only found in the community which exists solely in Christ.¹

In using the word body, Paul does not fall into the Corinthians' enthusiasm. Body is anti-enthusiastic, for Christology for Paul is expressed in anthropological terms. Paul sees the reality of the believers' standing before God in terms of a dynamic reality. The reality of the believer is bound up with that of the cosmos. Thus, for Paul Christian ethics in the world becomes service to God in the sphere of the body which is destined for resurrection.²

Paul also answers to the Corinthian enthusiasts by bringing back into Christology the horizontal eschatological schema. Thus in 1 Cor 15 he fights the enthusiasts under the banner of apocalyptic in terms of resurrection, time, history and the world.³

In the passage of 1 Cor 6:12-20 Paul presents a matter of censure. He had previously blamed the lack of moral discipline of the believers with regard to a flagrant case of porneia, a sin which seemed to be prevalent at Corinth (6:9; 7:2; cf. 2 Cor 12:21). This section begins with the slogan 'panta moi exestin' (v. 12), which according to Conzelmann "spans the whole content of chapters 6-10."⁴ As common to

¹Ibid., pp. 15 ff.

²See 1 Cor 6:12-20; 10:14-22, 31-35; 15:42-58; also Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians, pp. 249, 280-2.

³E. Käsemann, New Testament Questions of Today (London: SCM Press, 1969), pp. 124-137.

⁴Ibid., p. 109.

Pauline dialectic, Paul here recognizes the slogan used by the Corinthians. However, he pours into it new content and shapes it so as to show its limitations as far as freedom is concerned. The matter of sumpheron, "what is for the best," and its concrete parallel in 10:23, gives direction to Paul's main argument in verses 13-20. As far as Paul is concerned such a slogan does not provide the way to freedom. Conzelmann comments "freedom cannot cancel itself by making me unfree."¹ Paul sets out to remind the Corinthians of the true nature and meaning of Christian liberty. This liberty is defined in relation to the body of Christ which is destined to real union with Christ. It does not come out of independent or individualistic action; true freedom is found in the Church, for "all things are yours", but you are Christ's" (3:21-23).

While Christian freedom resides in the community its highest expression is Christological. It knows no withdrawal from the world but is set in the service of Christ.

In verse 13 Paul applies the basic principle of freedom to that of food (koilia, "belly") and to porneia (sōma, "body"). From this application he draws a definition of freedom. As far as he is concerned the relationship of food to the belly is a matter of indifference. For Paul there is a neutrality regarding food for the belly. But as far as the sōma is concerned there is no neutrality, for Christ is Lord over the body. In this regard any relationship to a prostitute involves the Lord to whom the believer belongs, and therefore limits the exercise of freedom (cf. vv. 14, 17, 19).²

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 111.

Paul explains the big difference there is between the body and the belly in terms of eschatology. If the food that is designed for the belly is transient and therefore makes the belly an earthly thing, the sōma for Paul is associated with the eschatological hope that now arises because the believers belong to Christ. Therefore the body cannot be devaluated to a transient and earthly thing. In fact the body is related to God's act of raising it.¹

The membership quality of the sōma and its eternal purpose is contrasted with the temporal purpose of the koila.² The relation that exists between the koila and brōmata does not exist between the sōma and porneia.³ Barrett also makes a similar comment: "there is no analogy between the use of the stomach for digestion and of the body for fornication."⁴ The sōma is made for the Lord to be a member of Christ. Unlike the koila the sōma is not brought to naught but it is transformed and glorified (cf. Phil 3:21). In actual fact there is no connection between the two as the destinies of the two categories are different. Therefore to 'cling to' porneia is to "repudiate the relationship of belonging to the body of Christ."⁵ It is to lose one's freedom.⁶ In verses 16-17 the antithesis between flesh and spirit heightens the nature and implications of the two different relationships.

¹See v. 14; 15:15; cf. 15:20; Rom 8:11; 2 Cor 4:14; Gal 1:1; etc.

²S. R. Driver; A. Plummer; and C. A. Briggs, A Critical Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians, International Critical Commentary, 2d edition (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1914), p. 123.

³Tbid., also C. K. Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1968), p. 147.

⁴Barrett, p. 148. ⁵Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians, p. 111.

⁶Tbid., n. 24; cf. Matt 19:5 (Gen 2:24); Deut 10:20.

The one who clings to Christ becomes one body with Him in the Spirit. The expression 'en pneuma' defines the reality in which union of the body with Christ is achieved.¹ The Spirit stands for the sphere, the power of influence under which the body finds its calling. Hence in Christ the body receives its union and unity under this sphere of the Spirit. Therefore to live in fornication is to commit an offence against the body and hence to place oneself under the grip of the power of the flesh, the antithetical sphere of influence that produces sin and immorality. In that sense the ignominious character of fornication takes away the Lordship of Christ over the body as well as the body's membership to Christ (v. 18).

In verse 19 Paul uses an image of the Church to express the reality of the individual believer.² He is the temple of God's Spirit. Conzelmann suggests that Paul is here transferring from the collective body (3:16) to the individual one (6:19), thus creating a pneumatological basis for relating the pneumatic body of Christ (v. 17) to the earthly body, the dwelling place of the Spirit (v. 19).³ Conzelmann also correctly emphasizes that "the Spirit does not lead us away from the body, but defines existence in the body as existence before God."⁴ Hence the believer's body "is the place of divine service."⁵ He does not belong to himself (v. 19) for he has been bought with a price (v. 20). His body is a ransomed body of which Jesus is Lord. The service of this body is a service of praise and glory to God.

In this section Paul has endeavoured to say to the Corinthians that they should understand their bodies on the basis of the body of

¹Ibid., p. 111. ²Ibid.; also Barrett, p. 151.

³Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians, p. 112. ⁴Ibid. ⁵Ibid., p. 113.

Christ, the Church. The body of Christ precedes theology and the individual's awareness of himself. The believers can be under either one of the two antithetical spheres of influence: flesh or spirit. Once they belong to Christ they cannot share lordship with the power of the flesh. Their calling is from the Spirit for membership with Christ and the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10:16-17. In this section the Lord's Supper has great significance as a communal act. It is used by Paul to express a criterion of conduct. From the traditional liturgical formula about the relationship of the bread to the body Paul deduces that since all partake of one bread, many are one body.¹ The symbols of the Supper are used here to give dimension to the body of Christ in the sense of the Church. Conzelmann comments; "Paul is aiming at an interpretation of the community by means of the Lord's Supper; . . . This link between the Lord's Supper and the concept of the Church is the new element which he introduces into the understanding of the sacraments."² Thus, to partake ceremonially of the elements is to become a sharer of the crucified body of Christ, it is "to lay hold of membership of Christ's body in the Church afresh."³ In using an already existing liturgical sacrament Paul describes the Eucharist as the body of Christ in order to express the reality of the unity of the ekklēsia. The term body is thus used with a double meaning. On the one hand the elements of the supper constitute one body, the body of Jesus of Nazareth. On the other hand the community that participates in the one loaf is also one body, the body of Christ. The participation of the community in the Eucharistic

¹Schweizer, p. 1070. ²Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians, p. 172.

³"Kasemann, Perspectives on Paul, p. 111.

elements, as Käsemann says, 'brings about a renewed and confirmed incorporation in the Church in its character as the body of Christ.'¹

In the writer's understanding, the importance of these two verses (16, 17) is substantiated by the link that Paul makes between the elements and the ekklēsia. The dual notion of bread and body strongly stresses the reality that the Church as the body of Christ is one body. In other words in participating in the one bread, the body, the believers are united to form the body of Christ. Conzelman rightly says: "the sacramental participation in Christ's body makes us into the body of Christ."² Therefore once we are united in the body of Christ there cannot be any connection with demons (v. 21).

1 Corinthians 11:27-29. After reminding the Corinthians that the earthly Jesus on the night of His betrayal shared the bread and the cup with His disciples (vv. 23-26), Paul begins a section (with v. 26) where he indicates that to partake unworthily in the Lord's Supper is incompatible with that which proclaims the death of Christ. To this end Paul seeks to restore reverence among the Corinthians by setting more clearly before them the solemn acts which underlie the Lord's Supper.³ In so doing he invites them to discern the Lord's body in the rite, for the Supper is no common meal. To drink of the cup and to share in the bread brings one into communion with Christ.

As in 10:16-17 the meaning of body in verse 27 serves a similar function. The double meaning of body is further substantiated by verse 29. Verse 26 already establishes the eschatological significance of the

¹Ibid., p. 111. ²Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians, p. 172.

³Marcus Dods, The First Epistle to the Corinthians (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1891), p. 267.

elements, a significance which is thrust upon the Church. Conzelmann correctly says that the Supper is "an institution for the age of the Church from the resurrection of Christ to his parousia."¹ There is a binding of the elements to the Church, and this binding is thought of here in terms of apocalyptic. As verse 27 indicates, any offence against the elements is an offence against the body of Christ, the Church (cf. 3:16; 6:19). The conclusion that this verse draws is fundamental. The guilty (enochos), the one who comes in an unworthy manner faces judgement (Krima) upon himself (v. 29) in his failure to distinguish the body from ordinary food. The exhortation (v. 28) to examine oneself before eating the bread and drinking the cup is a bid on the part of Paul to make the simple institution of the Supper the occasion of remembering one's criterion of existence in the Church.² This verse is thus linked with verse 17 where Paul says "when you assemble as a Church it is not for the better but for the worse". Apparently the Corinthians failed; in their enthusiasm, to understand and perceive the reality of the elements that make them a community. The consequences of such a failure are reported in verse 30 in instances of sickness, weakness and death. These plagues that befell the Corinthians are the educative measures for the community in view of the final judgement which is yet to come on the world,³ those who kill the Lord.

1 Corinthians 12:12, 13, 27. In the previous chapter Paul has dealt with conduct at divine worship: proclamation and celebration of the Lord's Supper. In his fight against the Corinthians' individualistic

¹Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians, p. 202.

²Ibid. ³Ibid., p. 203.

enthusiasm he made some cosmological and anthropological observations with regard to the nature of the community. In Christ there is no longer man or woman.¹ Then he binds up the community in terms of the Lord's Supper (vv. 17-34). Both belong to the eschatological age, from Christ's resurrection to His parousia.

In 12:12, 13 Paul uses an illustration taken from the human body to indicate the unity of Christ and the Spirit in the community. The figure of the one body in verse 12 receives its real meaning in the body of Christ. As for Paul the many and various parts of the body form a unified body, so it is with Christ. The factuality of this idea is provided by the idea of baptism (v. 13) which constitutes the incorporation of the believers into the one body and which brings about the abrogation of all differences between believers.² Also the incorporation of the believers into the one body through baptism presupposes an already existing body. Conzelman is right when he writes that . . . "the body of Christ is preexistent in relation to the 'parts'."³ Christ is the prototype of the many members' relationship. He is the whole body which unites the melē into an organic whole. He is the same Lord who imparts various services in the Church.

If for Paul the human body is a unique illustration of unity in diversity so it is with Christ's body. It is important to note in this context that "all the gifts would have to be together if the body is to function,"⁴ and also that the "body is no longer determined by the parts, but vice versa the parts by the whole."⁵ (v. 27).

¹Ibid., p. 191. ²Ibid., p. 212. ³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 214, n. 33. ⁵Ibid., p. 214.

The dominant note of the theme of the body, from verse 14 on, gives expression to Paul's attack against "enthusiastic individualism,"¹ those who dissociate themselves from the 'body'. For Paul the will of God is that every organ of the body (v, 18) is designed for the working together of the whole body (vv. 19-20). In fact there is a great interchangeability and indispensability between the different organs of the body (v, 21). God has so made the body that all parts are necessary, each compensating the other. Thus the eye can be linked with the hand and the head with the feet.²

The point Paul is making in this section is that in the body there can be no discord, no schismata (v, 25; cf. 11:18). All the parts of the body have to be together in order that the body may function as a whole. Similarly all the necessary gifts function in the body as they come together, being determined by the unity of the body as a whole. No gift can maintain superiority over the other ones. Each gift is democratically used for the unity of the body.

In summary Paul uses the term 'body' in 1 Corinthians with unique significance as he deals with the theological climate at Corinth. The early chapters seem to indicate a climate of enthusiasm and ecstasy characterized by an individualistic search for gnōsis and sophia. In their enthusiasm the Corinthians gave way to controversies, speculations and schismata.

The term of body is anti-enthusiastic in 1 Corinthians. It serves to express the reality of the life of the Christian in the community. The body is made for service to God and membership with Christ.

¹Ibid., p. 213. ²Ibid., n. 30.

Paul, however, uses the term with a double meaning. The elements of Supper are one body and the community is one body when it participates in the Supper.

The body of Christ, the Church, is made up of a diversity of parts. Each part is necessary to the good function of the whole body, and no one part has a superior status over another part.

Romans

Romans 7:4, 24. In Rom 7:4 Paul states that the believers "have died to the law through the body of Christ." In 7:24 he exclaims: "who will deliver me from this body of death?"

The discussion of chapter five points out the two solidarities under which the whole of mankind falls; one is Adamic, the other is Christ's. The two are cosmic, universal yet mutually exclusive.¹ They constitute two opposing orders or realms, two antithetical powers. The Adamic is of death (7:24), that of Christ is of life (5:17; 6:5, 23) and of the Spirit (8:9). Minear has well stressed the point:

The alternate and antithetical character of the two realms should be clear. The conflict between them is not only analogous to the two ages, and the two sonships, . . . In dealing with the body of death and its opposite, we are in touch with the cosmic and universal categories of early Christian thought.²

From the principle stated in verse one, which Paul clarifies in verses two and three,³ a conclusion is drawn in verse four that the death of the believers is the condition of their new union.⁴ Cranfield

¹Minear, Images of the Church, pp. 174-5. ²*Ibid.*, p. 175.

³C. E. B. Cranfield, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, International Critical Commentary, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1975), 1: 355.

⁴F. Godet, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, trans A. Cusin (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), p. 266.

comments:

Their being made dead to the law's condemnation through the body of Christ is a matter of God's merciful decision: they died in His death in that the death which He died was for them. Paul is not saying that they have a share in Christ's death because they now are united to Him (in His body) but that Christ died for them (and this means that they also died in God's sight) in order that they might be united to Him.¹

Karl Barth has also written: "with this human body of Christ we also are dead to the law, for we have been removed from that life under the dominion of law, which is death."²

Through the body of Christ the believers have died to the law as a sphere of influence and destiny. They now belong to the lordship of the risen Christ and bear fruit for God. These fundamental facts make them a community.³ The context of 7:4 heightens the connection between the idea of the Church and the 'body of Christ', for it is at this point that the Church has its existence and it is also through the event of the cross that the believers belong to one another.

Chapter 7 also presents the two antithetical powers which are seeking for supremacy and under which the believer finds himself. He can give his allegiance to one or the other of these two powers but not the two at once. However, through His death on the cross Christ has broken the power of the law and death and has united believers to Himself.

¹Cranfield, p. 336: "The assumption that the idea of the Church as the body of Christ is also present here is unwarranted." See also Robinson, p. 47.

²Karl Barth, The Epistle to the Romans (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 233.

³Minear, Images of the Church, pp. 175-6; also Best, pp. 52-3. He reminds us that the majority of commentators find in the phrase 'the body of Christ' only a reference to Christ's crucifixion.

Romans 12:4-8. When we come to Rom 12:4-8 Paul explicitly advances as in 1 Cor 10:17; 12:13 that the Christian community is a body. However he does not use the phrase 'body of Christ', but rather 'one body in Christ' (v. 5). Cranfield argues that it is hardly safe to assume here the idea of Christians being the body of Christ.¹ He understands the expression of verse 4 as basically a simile but this is to miss Paul's main point. Here the apostle takes up the idea of an organism--the body--to express the essential character of the Christian community. Paul reminds each individual Christian of the fact of the community.² In verse 1 the members are exhorted to offer their bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, and not to be conformed to this world (v. 2). They are also admonished to see each one "according to the measure of faith God has assigned him" (v. 3). The believers are not a mass of individuals but a body in Christ.

In using the illustration of the body Paul wishes the believers to perceive that as members of the body they possess special functions and capacities and that they should limit themselves to the function assigned to them. In this way everyone may be judged in proportion to the measure of faith God gave him (v. 6).

It is evident that Paul is pleading here for unity within the one body in Christ. There is a diversity of members with varied functions and capacities, but unity in and of the body is assured as every member seeks to remain within his functions and gifts (vv. 7-8). To this end love is necessary and must be genuine (v. 9).

¹Cranfield, 2: 617.

²K. Barth, p. 442.

Though Paul does not use here the term 'body of Christ', he correlates the bodies of Christians as members of Christ.¹ No member of the body has an isolable existence from the rest of the body. Every member in being a member of the body in Christ finds himself in and is aware of an already existing body, that of Christ.² He is a member of that body and participates in it through his gifts. He is incorporated in the many who "have been included in the one, the Church, as being represented by Christ."³ The many share a common belonging to Christ and a new unity with each other.⁴ They draw their existence as a body from the body of Christ and from the relation that knits them to Him.⁵ In other words they form "a corporate unity, all together in Him."⁶

In summary these passages in Romans concentrate on the revelation that the Church is one body, made up of many parts. Chapters 9 to 11 stress in particular the reality of the Church in terms of its unifying of the two great divisions of humanity: Jew and Gentile. In the cross event the two are one, in and with Christ. The Church is an historical-redemptive reality and as such includes the 'many' in one. Each believer is a member of Christ and His body--the Church. The inclusion of the believer in the Church is an inclusion in an already existing body--that of Christ. As part of the body, each has received gifts according to the measure of faith assigned to him.

¹"Kasemann, Perspectives on Paul, p. 114.

²Ridderbos, p. 372.

³Ibid., p. 371. ⁴Ibid. ⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.; also Schlier, p. 1069: "The community is in Christ. That is to say, it is incorporated into the history determined by Him. It is a unity from the very first."

'Body of Christ' in Colossians and Ephesians.

We have looked at the data of some passages in Corinthians and Romans regarding the theme of the body of Christ, and found that the constitutive factor of the unity of the believers is their incorporation into Christ and their participation in the gifts of the Spirit. Christ's body pre-exists the incorporation and appropriation of the believers to Himself.

Paul uses the term sōma with particular significance to present the true bodily union of the community with Christ.¹ The Church is, as Käsemann says,

subsequently made a partaker in the event of the cross by the one who is risen . . . in such a way that, moulded into the likeness of the one who was crucified, like him it manifests life sub-contrario as God's work in the act of dying physically.²

The idea of the body of Christ projects the thought that Christ fills and embraces the whole cosmic order. Christ is also the one who shapes the Church's life. Therefore He is not absorbed by the Church for He pre-exists it.

When we come to Colossians and Ephesians there is a different stage of development in Paul's use of the body of Christ concept. From 1 Corinthians and Romans to Colossians and Ephesians there is a development from paraenesis to theology. Both Colossians and Ephesians present the body of Christ with a spatial, cosmic dimension. There is however a fundamental similarity with 1 Corinthians and Romans. The Church is also called the body of Christ (Eph 1:23; 4:13), believers are his members (Eph 5:30), but within the framework of Colossians and Ephesians Christ is repeatedly called the Head of the Church or the Head of the Body.³

¹Schlier, p. 1073.

²"Käsemann, Perspectives on Paul, p. 113. ³Ridderbos, p. 376.

Colossians

Colossians 1:15-20. The body concept of Colossians 1:15-20 is presented within the framework of a Christological hymn. The occasion of the epistle seems to indicate that Paul is writing to combat a dangerous local heresy in order to buttress the Church.¹ The heresy apparently contained some doctrinal and practical issues: Christ was relegated to a relatively minor place; the stocheia, angelic principalities, were deemed necessary to the fullness of gnōsis and life in order that one might receive salvation; and the heretical party is presented as arguing that salvation depends on the observance of festivals and dietary rules and esoteric rituals. Even visions were thought to play a part (2:8-23). In other words the present heresy contained a mixture of liturgical, ascetic and mystery cult disciplines with strong Jewish as well as proto-gnostic constituents.²

Here the person of Christ is under attack and Paul meets the heresy with much precision and fulness.³ Paul starts his defence of the Person of Christ by establishing the reality in which the believers are found. God had delivered them from the dominion of darkness and transferred them to the kingdom of the beloved son in whom they have

¹ cf. emphasis on "the truth" 1:5 f; cf. 1:73; 2:4, 7 f; 16, 18. One false teacher had already made serious inroads (2:20-22).

² George Johnston, ed., Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd., 1967), p. 52; Kenneth S. Wuest, Ephesians and Colossians in the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1953), p. 163; also G. H. P. Thompson, The Letters of Paul to the Ephesians to the Colossians and to Philemon (Cambridge: University Press, 1967), pp. 118-120.

³ J. B. Lightfoot is cited in Wuest, p. 163, saying: "The doctrine of the Person of Christ is here stated with greater precision and fulness than any other of St Paul's epistles."

redemption and forgiveness of sin (v.14). They are qualified by the Father to share in the inheritance of the saints (v.13).

Paul is here using a cosmic schema to introduce us into the plērōma of the divine essence (cf. the angelic mediators). The mystery cults are only speculations and empty deceit (2:8), for they deny the unique status of Jesus. Contrary to those who wished to make the stocheia responsible for the act of creation and the headship of the spiritual creation, Paul shows that all treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in the knowledge of God in Christ. In fact Christ is not only the chief manifestation of the divine nature, He exhausts the Godhead. In Him "all things hold together" (v.17): He contains the totality of the divine powers and attributes.¹

Also in his counter attack Paul shows how Christ is the solid basis of Christianity, the only true route to God, and how Christians can find security and release and where their prospects reside.² Paul stresses the fact that the historical Jesus lived a human life and died a human death. Thus it is in the human sōma of Christ that men are confronted with the 'image of the invisible God,' the "first-born of all creation" (v.15), and with the fulness of God (v.19). As creator of all things, dominions, powers and principalities (even the stocheia) Jesus has supreme authority and supremacy over them. The divine wisdom is identified with God's eikon, the one who became incarnate and shed His blood on the cross (v. 20) in order to reconcile the whole order of the universe, men and angelic beings, to God (cf. Eph 1-2; also Phil 2:6-11).

In verse eighteen the cosmic Christ is shown in relation to the natural universe. He is the sustainer, the vital bond of creation, and

¹Wuest, pp. 167-8. ²Thompson, pp. 122-5.

all things cohere in Him.¹ The headship of Christ over His body, the Church, finds its primary expression within the entire universe.² As Ralph P. Martin suggests:

Paul reinterprets the cosmological statement to give it sharper point by his addition of the phrase 'of the Church' . . . It is Paul's way of declaring the present rule of Christ over the world because he has already received headship in the Church of his body.³

Christ and His Church are therefore combined in order that He might have pre-eminence, for in Him the plērōma of God dwells in a unique way, and in Him all things are reconciled (vv. 19-20). As Adam marked the beginning of the old order, the coming of Christ, the second Adam, "marks a new beginning as a new segment of humanity is brought into existence."⁴ As the 'beginning' and 'first-born' (cf. Gen 49:3) Christ is portrayed as the founder of a people (cf. Rom 8:29) against whom no alien force or power can work havoc.⁵ For Paul Christ has overcome, destroyed and disarmed all evil powers and principalities in His victory in the cross (2:15) and brought them under their rightful head (2:10) against whom they rebelled. In making peace by the blood of His cross Christ has "reached even those malevolent forces and secured for them a place in God's design for the universe in which at the last, there should be no discord (Eph 1:10)."⁶ In returning from the dead (v. 18) Jesus had realized a 'break-through'. The closed-system had failed to contain Him. By His victory He had broken the grip of the evil forces that held man in enslavement.⁷ And through the reconciliation of Christ (vv. 20-22) human beings are therefore in touch with the ultimate power of the cosmos.

¹ Ralph P. Martin, Colossians and Philemon New Century Bible Revised edition (London: Marshall Morgan & Scott, 1978), p. 59.

² Schweizer, pp. 1074 ff. ³ Martin, p. 59. ⁴ Ibid., pp. 59.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 59-60. ⁶ Ibid., p. 61. ⁷ Thompson, p. 123.

In using the image of the body and the Head Paul indicates a way of escape from the concept that the cosmos is a "system or prison, walled in by evil forces which had to be broken through by various kinds of 'escape mechanism'."¹ From a cosmological statement that Christ is the head of the body the universe, Paul moves to a Christological and ecclesiological one in which He is the head of the body--the Church (vv. 18a, 18b). He also introduces the idea of the reconciliation through making peace by the blood of the cross in connection with redemption and forgiveness.² The reconciliation of Christ receives its greatest expression in the cross. Martin suggests that "the effect of Christ's death is the effect of a deed of love bringing its fruit in a human life which is touched by it."³ Thus it is possible to be incorporated in Christ's body. According to 2:12 baptism identifies the Christian with the 'break-through' realized by Christ. He is released from the fears and slaveries of the evil powers and deeds (1:21). He is no longer estranged but he is reconciled with God (1:22). He has now future prospects in Christ and is presented holy, blameless, irreproachable (v. 23) to appear with Christ in His glory (3:4).

For Paul, Christ is the answer to cosmic anxieties and threats. If the cosmos had slipped away from man, Christ is now head of the universe, the guarantee to His body, the Church, that He is in control. Schlier says that as Head of the Church Christ not only 'permeates the

¹Ibid.

²Martin, p. 63; also E. Schweizer, "The Church as the Missionary Body of Christ," NTS (1961-2): 1-11.

³Martin, p. 61.

cosmos,"¹ but fills and embraces the Church as He fills and embraces the whole cosmos.

The Church as the body of Christ (1:24; 3:15) finds its expression in the indicative fact of what Christ is in relationship to the universe, and what He has accomplished in His sufferings and death (3:3). He unites the members of the body in a mutual and general solidarity.² The unity of the body is that "there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all" (3:11; cf. Eph 2:14 ff). In Christ the two great divisions of humanity, Jew and Gentile, are united through His death (cf. Gal 3:28).

Colossians 2:19. The statement in 2:19 is an exhortation to the members to hold fast to the Head, for from Him the whole body grows, is nourished and knitted together. This terminology is not found in 1 Corinthians and Romans. There Jesus is presented as the body while the saints are incorporated into Him (eg. 1 Cor 12:12, 'for just as the body is one and has many members, . . . , so it is with Christ.') Here in Colossians Paul stresses the cosmic significance and privilege of the body--the Church. The Church shares in the unique status of Christ as originator and source of all authority. The whole context of 1:15-20 (cf. 2:10), where Jesus is seen above all rules and authority, seems to point toward this conclusion.

¹Schlier, p. 1080.

²Ibid., p. 1076; also Käsemann, Perspectives on Paul, p. 116.

Colossians 3:15. The passage in 3:15 deals with the peace of Christ that rules (brabeuō) the field of reconciliation between God and man.¹ In this reconciliation the members of the Church are brought into one body. For as Thompson suggests "the single body, the Church, consists of those who have accepted this call of God in Jesus to be at one with him,"² Christ is the one who umpires and adjusts the passions and feelings of the members of the body. The possibility exists for one to be detached from the head of the Church and therefore to be put out of touch with the source of true life and nourishment. For to cease to depend on the Head of the body is to cease to belong to the body.³ Therefore Paul calls the believers to put on compassion, kindness, meekness, patience, forbearing and forgiving one another (3:12-13) in order to enjoy the peace of Christ. Above all they are called to put on love which gives coherence to the Christian life.

In summary the body of Christ receives cosmic significance in Colossians. Paul moves from a cosmological statement of the body to a Christological one. The Church as the body of Christ finds its primary significance in the universe which is also the body of Christ. With Christ at its head the Church is thus elevated to cosmic dominion and authority. The whole body is nourished, sustained and knitted together by the Head. To cease to depend on the Head, the originator and source of the Church authority and status, is to alienate oneself from the body and its unity and therefore to cease to belong to the body.

¹ Brabeuō, an athletic term means 'be umpire'.

² Thompson, pp. 154-5.

³ Martin, p. 92.

Ephesians

There are some striking similarities between Colossians and Ephesians; however, some words and expressions are used in different senses and connections.¹ The epistle to the Ephesians appears as a kind of manifesto that brings hope and encouragement to the Christians showing the benefits of the Christian faith, the place of the Church in God's plan, and the nature of the Christian life.²

With regard to the body of Christ concept in both Colossians and Ephesians, the image 'head-body' appears for the first time in Paul to indicate the Christ-Church relationship. In Ephesians, however, there is a new dynamic: a heavenly head and an earthly body.

Ephesians 1:18-23. In the first chapter of Ephesians Paul has endeavoured to praise God for the blessings of election and redemption through the Son, and the promise of the Holy Spirit (vv. 4-14). He prays that the Ephesians may know what is the hope to which they are called, the inheritance that awaits them and the power of God who realizes this hope and inheritance (vv. 15-23). He also underscores the fact that the Church is the fullness of Him who fills all in all (v. 23). Previously in verse 10 he had reminded the Ephesians that God has set forth Christ to unite all things in heaven and on earth. Here as in Colossians we are presented with a spatial dimension which introduces us to the sovereignty of Christ in both heaven and earth. Christ is seen to

¹See De Wette's list of parallel passages between Colossians and Ephesians, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1897), p. XXIII.

²Thompson, pp. 19-20; also Johnston, p. 6.

exercise a dominion from which nothing that exists is excluded.¹ In fact, as indicated by verses 20-21, Christ participates in the highest position of honour and power.² In this capacity He has a more intimate relation to the Church of which He is the Head (v. 22). The believers have hope for heaven because the divine power that has made this possible has been displayed in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ at the right hand of God (v. 20). They are an embodiment of the plērōma of Christ (v. 23), contrary to Col 1:19 where Christ is said to be the plērōma of God.³ The Church as Christ's body is essential to His fullness.

The relationship that exists between head and body is of vital importance (vv. 22-23). As Head, Jesus is the one who controls; as body the Church is the sphere controlled, the community of men under the lordship of Christ. In His unique status as Head of the Church Jesus receives the plērōma of God. Being the sphere of His influence and operations, the Church is filled with Christ's fullness.

Ephesians 2:11-22, In chapter two Paul expresses the thought that the exhibition of God's power has not stopped at the level of Christ's headship. In Christ the believers are made partakers of the resurrection. When they were yet dead in sin Christ loved them and gave them life in order that they might walk in the works that God had designed (1-10).

¹William Hendriksen, Ephesians (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1972), p. 102.

²Abbott, p. 32.

³In Col 1:19; cf. 2:9 the whole plērōma or plenitude of the Godhead is recognized as 'Framer and Governor' of the universe. Here in Eph 1:23 the plērōma of Christ is imparted to the Church. See Abbott, pp. 35-7; also Wuest, pp. 57-8.

The whole section 11-22 states that Christ has broken down the barriers between Jews and Gentiles. Both constitute the temple that God now inhabits. Paul reminds the class of the Gentiles of their past. Apparently it was a case more hopeless than that of the privileged and circumcised Jews. The Jews boasted of the sign which identified them as belonging to the Jewish nation, but Paul argues that their circumcision was a mere physical performance or manual operation.

The Gentiles as a race had no identity. The lowness of their condition was such that it brought contempt on the part of the Jews. They were "Christless, stateless, friendless, hopeless, and Godless."¹ The Gentiles were far removed from what made Israel a theocratic institution as well as from the promise of the Messiah.

But out of their hopelessness, darkness and despair they have now emerged into being, in touch with Christ and His purposes. The words 'but now' (v. 13) indicate a sharp contrast with those of verses 11 and 12, 'formerly' and 'at that time'. Formerly they were 'far away', now they are 'nearby'. Formerly they were separated from Christ, now through His blood they are saved by grace through faith (v. 8). Formerly they were strangers to the Commonwealth of Israel, now they are fellow-citizens with the saints and members of the household of God (v. 11). Formerly they were alienated from the covenants of the promise, now they are covenant members (cf. Gal 3:29). Formerly they were without God in the world, now they are at peace with Him through Jesus Christ.

What the law and ordinances could not do has been achieved by Christ our peace (cf. Isa 9:6; John 14:27; 16:33; 20:19, 20). In bringing about reconciliation between God and man Christ has also welded the

¹Hendriksen, p. 129.

two great divisions of mankind into one organic whole, one body through the cross (v. 16). This single body is Jesus Christ Himself, the one who incarnates the peace of God. Christ's body is all-inclusive and knows no distinction of nationality, race, class or birth. In Him Jews and Gentiles can become one humanity through incorporation into His body. In the sight of God there is no enmity and division between Jews and Gentiles.

The image of the one body through the cross (v. 16) leads to the picture of the Church as the household where the apostles and prophets rank first (v. 20; cf. 1 Cor 12:28). However the whole household holds together to Jesus the Cornerstone (cf. Isa 28:16, Ps 118:22; Matt 27:42; Acts 4:11). Christ is the stone that locks all the other stones together. It is He who gives harmony to the entire building and fits it together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (v. 22).

God's household is a spiritual and not a physical or national entity (v. 18). It is not exclusive but inclusive. It embraces all those who have been reconciled by the blood of Christ, Jews and Gentiles, in order to form an earthly dwelling place where there cannot be any division among men but rather a place where God can live in permanent fellowship with man (v. 22).

Ephesians 4:1-16. In the previous chapter Paul had invited the Church to strive to declare God's marvelous wisdom to all the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. In fact great blessings were bestowed upon both Jews and Gentiles. They have been reconciled to God and to one another and been made one sanctuary.¹ As a Church they should

¹Tbid., p. 149.

strive to know the love of Christ which surpasses all knowledge in order that they may be filled with all the fullness of God (v.19).

It is clear from the opening verse of chapter 4 that this section emphasizes unity. It is not a mechanical and external unity but rather an internal and organic one. It proceeds from within the body of the Church through the power of the Holy Spirit (vv. 3-4). The first six verses establish the fact that the Church is spiritually a unity. Therefore believers are called to keep it that way. Verse 1 is particularly strong as Paul exhorts the Ephesians to live a life worthy of what they already are, as a people, to reach ahead to the realities of their calling in Christ, and to reach back to all the blessings and exalted positions that they have enjoyed (chaps. 1-3).

The calling of the Ephesians is qualified by such words as tapeinophorosunē (a deep and true estimate of oneself and one's smallness and demerit), prautētos (inwrought grace of the soul exercised before God and man), makrothumia (patience with respect of person), hupomonē (patience with respect of things), and anechein (to sustain, to bear with equanimity, to bear with and endure, etc.).¹ Their calling has also brought hope, a hope firmly grounded in the one body and Spirit (v.4), one family in heaven and on earth (3:15).

The oneness of the Church is thought of in terms of one body, one Spirit and one hope. Its source is in one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father (vv. 5-6); cf. 1 Cor 12:4-6). There is a kind of climax here. Paul first presents the Church, then Christ, and then God. The order, Spirit, Lord and Father seems to indicate the same idea.²

¹Wuest, pp. 94-5. ²Abbott, p. 109.

The Fatherhood of God (v. 6; cf. 1:3, 17; 2:18; 3:14, 15) is a redemptive Fatherhood. God is 'over all', 'through all', and 'in all', and He places us into the body of which Christ is the Head according to our act of faith through the Holy Spirit (v. 7), and to each one (hekastō³) grace (charis) was given. Each member of the body partakes of Christ's gift of grace: therefore each has a role to play in the unity of the body and the maintenance of peace. Christ Himself gave donata to men (vv. 7-8), "some as apostles, some as evangelists, some as pastors and teachers" (v. 11). The object of all this is the perfection of the saints, the work of the ministry, the upbuilding in order that they may be one in the faith and in the knowledge of God's son, and mature to the stature of the fullness of Christ, so as not to be carried away by the winds of false doctrine, but that the whole body may grow into the Head from whom it receives nourishment, cohesion and is built in love (vv. 12-16).

As Head of the Church Christ is the source of growth and well-being of every member. He is the one who joins the parts closely together (sunarmologeō), to cause them to coalesce (sunbibazō).¹ Through the life of the Head, the whole body which is made up of many parts, is constantly growing into an organic whole.² Wuest comments:

The life of the Head flowing through the bands of supply, is constantly joining together and causing to grow together the individual members, this process being controlled or dominated by the operative energy put forth, the volume or strength of this operative energy coming from the Head of the Body, being determined by the capacity of each part to hold and allow to operate in him or her . . . This more compactly built Body will show in the closer ties of Christian love and brotherhood as exhibited by the saints in their Christian experience.³

¹These two verbs are present participles and indicate a process going on. The body is constantly being joined closely together and growing together.

²Wuest, p. 105. ³Ibid.

Ephesians 5:21-33. The pericope of 5:21-33 develops the same idea in a different manner. Here the analogy of the marriage relationship is used to teach about what the head-body relationship should be and how members of the Church should be subjected to one another.

Paul had reminded the Ephesians that they must be renewed (4:23) in putting off the old man and in putting on the new (4:22, 24). In this process of renewal they are urged to replace falsehood by speaking the truth (4:25), sinful anger by what is not sinful (4:26), stealing by sharing (4:28) etc. After these general admonitions Paul comes to issue a series of special ones which now apply to a special group: wives and husbands (5:23-33), children and parents (6:14), slaves and masters (6:5-9).¹

The pericope of 5:21-33 is the main concern of this paper for it delineates the fact that the relationship of Christ and the Church is the pattern of the type of relationship that should exist between husbands and wives. With Christ at its Head the Church is subject to Him and so it should be of the wife who has the husband at her head. The husband's love for his wife is illustrated by Christ's love for the Church. However Christ is not only the Head of the Church, His body, but He is also its saviour. At this point the analogy becomes imperfect but does not lose its purpose.

In unfolding the Christian law of natural subjection or submissive consideration Paul first sets out the Christian duty of the wives.² The wives have to regard the submission they show to their husbands as (hos) a submission rendered to Christ.³ The reason of such submission is 'hoti

¹Hendriksen, p. 247.

²Wuest, p. 128. ³Ibid., p. 130.

anēr esti kephalē tēs gunaikos' (v. 23) even as Christ 'ho Christos kephalē tēs ekklēσίας 'autos sōtēr tou sōματος', Nevertheless (alla),¹ as the Church is subject to Christ and renders Him obedience, so too are wives to give obedience to their husbands.

However, as the wife voluntarily yields in love to her husband so should the husband love his wife.² The type of relationship that prevails in the head-body concept is one of a deep gift of love. Christ as Head of the Church gave Himself in self sacrifice for the Church in order to present it to Himself holy and without blemish (v. 27).

The concept of head-body also stresses an idea of independence and mutual dependence. Ridderbos is correct when he writes that both terms head and body

each in its own way and each from 'its own side', materially give expression to the same idea, that of the Church belonging to Christ, both in the redemptive-historical and corporate as well as in the pneumatic sense of the word.³

Also Ridderbos says that the idea of 'head' emphasizes Christ's initial position and His redemptive significance to the Church, while the term 'body' expresses the Church as belonging to Christ as well as the "mutual relationships within itself in its dependence on and in its pneumatic communion with Christ."⁴

It is evident that the concept of body in Ephesians represents a departure from that of 1 Cor and Col. Though there are some similarities here the body concept establishes the reality that the Church is filled with the fullness of Christ and contains a mutual relationship within

¹ alla is a strong adversative particle. It opposes and discounts what has gone before. See Wuest, p. 31; also Abbott, pp. 166-7.

² agapō refers to the love that God is (1 John 4:8) and showed at calvary (John 3:16) and the Holy Spirit puts in the heart (Gal 5:22).

³ Ridderbos, p. 382. ⁴ Ibid., pp. 382-3.

itself. Kasemann suggests that the body concept in Ephesians has moved toward the idea that the "Church has become the central eschatological event".¹ The unity of the world is demonstrated both in the heavenly head of Jesus and in His earthly body--the Church.

The eschatological unity of the whole creation under God (4:1-16) is extended to the unity of the body as "a fully ontological and a fully eschatological reality."² For in Christ all men find the reality of their being and all men are once again unified. Through His death Christ has reconciled all hatred and conferred living membership on the whole of mankind.³ Through His death Christ has assured the survival of humanity from total annihilation. As Head of the Church Christ imparts His life to every member and leads him to maturity and holiness.

In summary the epistle to the Ephesians, like that of Colossians, develops a new aspect of the body of Christ. Christ is Head of the cosmos, He fills it and embraces it. The Church which is this body is nourished by Him and grows towards Him. It is elevated to cosmic dimensions and shares in the dominion of Christ. The headship of Christ stresses the initial position and His subsequent redemptive significance with regard to the body. As the body the Church belongs entirely to Christ. There exist within the body mutual relationships and pneumatic communion with Christ 4:16 ff. (cf. Col 2:19; Rom 12:1; 1 Cor 12). In sharing the fullness of Christ, members of the body share also in His gifts to the Church which are for the perfection of the saints, the work of ministry, and the upbuilding of the whole body.

¹"Kasemann, Perspectives on Paul, p. 121.

CHAPTER IV

UNDERSTANDING AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

CONCEPT OF LAOS

Theological Understanding

The examination of the terms laos and ekklēsia with respect to the body of Christ has enriched the theological understanding of the Church as the people of God. No lesser issues are at stake when the ekklēsia's relationship to Israel is considered. The above outline of the laos, ekklēsia and the body of Christ is by no means exhaustive. All three terms are thought of as a profoundly theocentric reality and their meanings have ultimate ground in the election of Jesus Christ.

It has already been seen that the idea of a people has rich biblical and especially Old Testament roots. The term laos has served to emphasize the special and privileged position of Israel as a people.¹ Strathmann has argued that in the New Testament "a new and figurative Christian concept arises along with the old biological and historical view and crowds it out."² Though there is "a current of thought which tends to consider the new Christian community as the laos of God,"³ it is the opinion of the writer that this idea did not find full expression in the Gospels where the term ekklēsia is practically absent. The idea of the Church is implicit in the Gospels, not explicit. Christology seems to be the backdrop of meditations on the Christian community in

¹Strathmann, p. 32. ²Ibid., p. 54. ³Pancaro, p. 120.

the Gospels. For instance in the parable of the vine, John presents Jesus as the true vine and hence Israel. Therefore within the context the Christian community cannot be Israel. But in the Pauline epistles, Ephesians and Colossians in particular the doctrine of the Church is more developed and presents the explicit idea of its being the Israel of God.

In his book Jesus and His Church Flew has especially established the essential unity of the teaching of the various New Testament writings as to the nature of the Church. According to him the Church is a creation of God, and has come into existence through human response to the saving deed of God in Christ. As such it is the eschatological Israel of God and possesses the eschatological gift of the Spirit, and thus is able to bring God's promises to all from afar off.

The New Testament appears therefore as the fulfilment and continuation of the Old Testament which "is largely the story of the calling and creation of Israel."¹ God's purpose to create in Israel His people finds its continued expression in the New Testament ekklesia, a body and fellowship of persons under the Kingship of Christ, the Messiah of Jewish expectation. Flew writes; "the Lordship of Christ is the constitutive facet for the Church,"² or in the words of Dodd, Jesus as the Son of Man "incorporates in Himself the people of God, or humanity in its ideal aspect."³

¹Stagg, p. 171. ²Flew, p. 160.

³C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1953), p. 242, on the presence of "Son of Man" in the Fourth Gospel.

NOT FOR CIRCULATION



The concept of the body of Christ particularly substantiates the idea of the unifying and reconciling of Jews and Gentiles through the death of Christ. All those children of wrath who were separated from Christ, alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel and were strangers to the Covenants of promise, without hope and God in the world have been united in Christ (Eph 2:12). In His death Christ has created of the two great divisions of humanity, Jew and Gentile, one new humanity, and replaced the enmity of the two by peace. In Colossians Paul shows that the cosmic Christ has pre-eminence in all things. He is Head over all things as well as Head of the Church. As the body of Christ the Church is elevated to a cosmic dimension and shares in the authority of its Head.

The election of Israel and the Church shows that God is faithful (Rom 3:3-4; 1 Cor 10:13 etc.), that His righteousness is received through faith in Jesus Christ, and in Him there is no distinction (Rom 3:22). God's performance, plan, and counsel, are eternal and solid. His mighty acts in Israel's past are an assurance for the Church that the future is in His hands, and that He is consistent with Himself. The whole history of Israel as the people of God is a reminder to the people of the ekklēsia that they are "chosen, gathered, built up, sealed according to the eternal election and economy of God,"¹ This economy and election are conceived outside time (Eph 1:4; 3:11).

The whole existence of the ekklēsia resides in the reality of an already existing unity and Commonwealth, that of Israel. When the ekklēsia's solidarity with Israel is observed the reality of the history

¹Barth, Israel and the Church, p. 100.

of the Gentiles can be demonstrated and acknowledged. The whole Commonwealth of Israel, their covenants and promises, are a reminder to the Gentiles of their own history, that by the sheer grace and will of God they are no longer strangers, dead in their sins (Eph 2:5, 8, 12, 19).¹ They now share in the gifts and privileges of Israel, forming a new Commonwealth and a new fellowship. To belong to the ekklēsia is to belong to a people under the sign of the Messiah. Entry into this people is not by birth or by status but is through faith in Christ. Membership in the ekklēsia implies a dynamic relationship with Christ and with every fellow member. It means also active service and ministry to the world.

Fellowship of the ekklēsia

The fellowship of all Christians in the one body of Christ is an essential and basic feature of the biblical account. It is not an abstract idea but it is an intensely practical concept which postulates a basic understanding of human behaviour and attitudes in the Church,

The idea of fellowship hinges on the reality of the headship of Christ over the Church and on the meaning of the Church as His body. Through baptism the members of the ekklēsia become 'one in Christ' (Gal 3:28; Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 10:17). This unity in Christ constitutes a fellowship of members (Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:12ff). Therefore, since the ekklēsia is one body made up of many members, and since Christ is the source and origin of this unity, no individual member can "transcend its own individuality."²

¹Ibid., p. 101.

²Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, rev. ed. SCM Press Ltd., 1959), p. 218.

The idea of the Church as a community of fellowship is expressed particularly in 'Paul's family terminology.' At its basis there is "the relationship that exists between Christ, and as a corollary the Christian, and God."¹ The members of the body must see themselves as members of a family whose Head is God the Father (1 Thess 1:1; 3:11, 13; 2 Thess 1:1-2; 2:16). God has sent Christ into our hearts so that we can address Him in the most intimate word: Father! The members of the Church are no longer slaves, no longer under the stocheia of this world, they are oikonomoi of the house of God (1 Cor 4:1-2; 9:17; Col 2:25).

The Spirit is at the center of the eschatological community. To acknowledge that Jesus is Lord is to be prompted by the Spirit (1 Cor 12:3). In the Spirit we become children of God and members of one another (Rom 8:14-17). By the Spirit we are directed from particularity to universality, from sōma to plērōma.²

The idea of and words for fellowship abound in scripture. The adjective koinos and its cognates occur frequently and could be translated "shared in," "held in common." There is also frequent occurrence of the nouns koinōnia "sharing," "fellowship"; koinōnos "sharer," "partner," and the verb koinoneō "to have, to give a share in" of which frequent synonyms are metechō and metalambanō. The sun nouns are frequently used by Paul to express the idea of togetherness and

¹Robert Banks, Paul's Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in their Historical Setting (Surry Hills, N.S.W.: Anzea Publishers Ltd, 1979), p. 63.

²T. F. Torrance, Royal Priesthood: Christ and Ours (London: Epworth Press, 1958), p. 26.

partnership such as "fellow-workers," "fellow-prisoners," "fellow-servants," "fellow-soldiers," "fellow-citizens," "fellow-heirs."

The basic reality that Paul presents in relation to the idea of fellowship is that the cross event is the central and unique historical fact for an appraisal of the existence and nature of the Church as the body of Christ. With the cross of Christ a new age has dawned, a new humanity is created and a new lordship is established. Every dividing wall of hostility is abolished. In Christ the whole Church enters into a dynamic relationship with God and becomes one body with Him. In their incorporation with Christ, the members of the body become united to One whose body fills and embraces the whole cosmic order. In Christ the whole Church is reconciled and at peace with God. Fellowship in the death of Christ also implies fellowship with one another.

The cross event is important for a proper understanding of fellowship. The believers participate in the different phases of Christ's life (Rom 6:6, 8; 8:17; 2 Cor 7:3) and in His sufferings (Phil 3:10). One can also participate in the grace and glory of Christ (Phil 1:7; 3:10), partake of God's promise (Eph 3:6), and of the divine nature (1 Pet 1:4). This is made possible through participation in the Spirit (2 Cor 13:13; Phil 2:1) and its fruit: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal 5:21-3).

In his writings Paul takes pain to stress that unless members of the ekklēsia fellowship with the Son (1 Cor 1:9), their spiritual communion with each other will lack direction. The epistles to the Romans and 1 Corinthians emphasize in particular that Christian

believers are partners working together in fellowship and union in service for the community and the world. Fellowship in the body means also integrity and interdependence in special union with Christ the Head, dynamic participation in the needs of the saints (Rom 12:13), and loving assistance.¹

For Paul the sacraments, baptism and the Lord's supper, are great means of fellowship. They enhance the fellowship in Christ (1 Cor 10:16ff). In the context of the Corinthians who "were under-estimating the moral dangers of a heathen social order,"² Paul underlines the nature of true fellowship. Fellowship is not only on the level of the sacraments, in the sharing of the one loaf; it is also in self-sacrifice, in works of love, acceptance, forgiveness and sharing in the community. Thorton writes:

The individual finds his highest privilege through participation in that which is common to all. Yet what he participates in at Holy Communion is not merely the life of the community regarded as a human fellowship. He participates jointly with his fellow-communicants in the life of Christ, as that life is imparted to the Church.³

The theme of the collection is a tangible illustration of what an expression of fellowship means.⁴ Here is a tremendous and manifest Gentile enthusiasm for the collection. It was an experience of self-sacrificing and self-giving. The Gentiles not only gave their financial means, they also gave themselves. Their generosity provided great thanksgiving to God as an anticipation of the time when all nations

¹Acts 2:44; 4:32; Rom 15:26; 2 Cor 8:1ff.; 9:1ff.

²L. S. Thorton, The Common Life in the Body of Christ, 4th ed. (London: Diacre Press, 1963), p. 324.

³Ibid., p. 328.

⁴Acts 11:29; 15: 24:17; Rom 15:16, 26-28; 1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8:1-9; 9:1-13.

will come to Jerusalem.

In the collection Paul establishes a strange interdependence between Gentiles and Jews. He shows the unity of both Gentiles and Jews in the sight of the Gospel and the full implications of the doctrine of justification of the ungodly, by faith. For him there is one way of salvation, one way of faith, one Gospel which was first proclaimed to Israel and which Gentiles are called to accept. Furthermore, the collection establishes the fact of the new reality in Christ: Jews are called to accept Gentiles and Gentiles to do likewise.

While fellowship is a way of existence within the body of Christ, that is, the believers are primarily united with Christ and have fellowship with one another, the New Testament does not deny the outward direction of fellowship. It is in the reality of its internal love and unity that the Church can be a witness to the world and have table fellowship with sinners. In other words fellowship in the body of Christ is the concrete expression of witness to the world that the Church as it incarnates Christ has something to offer to the problem of sin and to the evils in society.

In summary the hallmark of the laos of God is fellowship with God and with fellow laikoi. It is the regular practice of this twofold fellowship that makes the Church a missionary community open to the world. Fellowship in the Church should aim to make of the faithful "fully formed Christians and 'missionaries'."¹ The claim of the Church to be the laos of God and a community of ministry and mission to the

¹Frederick Dale Brumer, A Theology of the Holy Spirit (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), p. 300, n. 23.

world stands or falls with its claim to be a community of fellowship in Christ.

Missiological Understanding

If every man is God's handiwork, if every man is under judgment, the Church as a whole has a powerful motive for ministry and service, for creating a social order of love and justice, for no one is outside the divine concern.¹

It is clear from the New Testament that all Christians are to be ministers and therefore to be involved in the ministry of the Church to the world. This world is the sphere of human activity, of sin, of alienation, and the object of God's reconciling love.² In its reality as a body, the Church finds its calling in the realities of human existence. The Church as a whole carries out its calling before God in genuine somatic existence. It is in the sōma that the Church finds its spiritual life. Death is the life principle of the Church. But because of Jesus' experience of humanity in death and resurrection the Church is swallowed up in victory. It is created as a sōma by God through the Spirit, the only place where life can be found in Christ Himself. As it lives in the Spirit it is a priesthood in the service of God, bringing to God the offering of the world. Thus the ministry of the Church has in view the subjugation of the world to God and to Christ.

The mission of the Church takes place in the framework of its

¹Elton Trueblood, "The Life of Service," Christianity Today 14 (January 30, 1970):3.

²Gen 1:31; Luke 5:32; Rom 5:8; 14:14, 20; 2 Cor 5:19; Col 1:20.

somatic existence whilst in daily contact with the world, Edwards writes:

In the New Testament the Church is seen in vital and daily contact with every element of the world through the lives of its members. Whether assembled together for study and worship or in dispersion, the first century Christians continually sought to perform every task in the light of their relationship with the risen Christ.¹

The ministry of Christ to the world and the Church must be the pattern for any understanding of the Church's mission. The Gospel's records describe the redemptive mission of Christ in terms of service and ransom (cf. Mark 10:45). From His baptism to the cross Jesus embodied a life of service to and solidarity with those who were lost.² He humbly obeyed God's will, choosing the way of self-denial and suffering.

In His mission to the world Jesus was one with the Father so as to be in solidarity with the suffering and the guilty. His ministry was a ministry of love, forgiveness and healing, an incarnation of God's kingdom.

Out of the emptiness and poverty of the life they once lived for themselves, the members of the Church have come to Jesus Christ in whose unlimited resources they share.³ Thus, they have become His ministers. Anything else clearly violates the demands of discipleship as presented by Christ. To save souls for Christ is a privilege and prerogative of

¹Rex. D. Edwards, A New Frontier--Every Believer a Minister (Mountain View, California; Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1979), p. 6.

²Luke in particular shows Christ's solidarity with those who were despised, rejected, outcasts and poor in their society. He pleaded for help from the "haves" to the "have-nots."

³Lawrence O. Richards and Clyde Hoeldike, A Theology of Church Leadership (Grand Rapids, Michigan; Zondervan Publishing House, 1980), p. 105.

all who constitute His people.¹ Self-denial, taking up one's cross, comradeship with Christ, loving one's neighbour, are all demanded of Christ's disciples.² This level of dedication exists for all those who enter a faith relationship with Christ, not only for "a select upper crust of professional Christians,"³ for no difference in rank or status should divide the people of God.⁴

To best achieve their mission in the world the members of the Church need to "possess an adequate understanding of the Church and their calling in it,"⁵ thus "the responsibility for carrying out their ministry would not need legislating. Rather it would be a spontaneous outgrowth of such an understanding."⁶ Ellen G. White has solemnly stated: "Not one in a hundred among us is doing anything beyond engaging in common, wordly enterprises. We are not half awake to the worth of the soul for whom Christ died."⁷ Again she says:

All who receive the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow men. For this work the Church was established, and all who take upon themselves its sacred vows are thereby pledged to be co-workers with Christ.⁸

The nature of the mission of the Church stands or falls with its claim as the people of God, to be a priesthood of all believers. The Church is founded for the equipping of the saints (Eph 4:12) and for a

¹E. G. White, Desire of Ages (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1898), p. 822; also: "The Saviour's commission to the disciples included all the believers. It includes all believers in Christ to the end of time. It is a fatal mistake to suppose that the work of saving souls depends alone on the ordained minister."

²Edwards, p. 14. ³Ibid. ⁴Ibid., p. 6.

⁵Ibid. ⁶Edwards, p. 6.

⁷E. G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 9 vols. (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 8:148.

⁸White, Desire of Ages, p. 822.

ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:15-20). Every member of the Church is called to Christ Himself in order to find a work. As Edwards says:

Within the context of our life in Him we are given our work and callings. Some are designated pastors, teachers, and evangelists for the building up of the total ministry of the Church and the extension of the Kingdom.¹

Again E. G. White states; "every follower of Jesus has a work to do as a missionary for Christ, in the family, in the neighbourhood, in the town or city where he lives."² Also "the dissemination of the truth of God is not confined to a few ordained ministers. The truth is to be scattered by all who claim to be the disciples of Christ."³ This idea is stated in still stronger terms: "not upon the ordained minister only rests the responsibility of going forth to fulfill this commission. Everyone who has received Christ is called to work for the salvation of his fellow men."⁴

The meaning of laos is vital for an understanding of the ministry of the Church and its mission. It has already been stated that in the eschatological community of the Christian Church all believers stand as equals before God (Gal 3:27-28 etc.). Thus the missionary character of the Church is fundamental to its self-understanding as the eschatological people of God, and to its perception that Christ is

¹ Edwards, p. 14.

² E. G. White, Christian Service (Takoma Park, Washington: Home Missionary Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1947, p. 18.

³ Ibid., p. 68.

⁴ E. G. White, The Acts of the Apostles (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), p. 110.

the Saviour of the whole world,

Not only are laymen ministers, but Edwards suggests that "If laos means the people of God in the root meaning of the word, then ministers are laymen too."¹ Arnold Come expresses a similar idea:

If the mere word 'laity' is preserved at all in our exxlesiastical terminology, all the traditional distinctions between clergy and laity will re-assert themselves . . . The Church is now ready for, and its God-given mission now demands, the complete abandonment of the clergy-laity distinction.²

Or again by Edwards:

The tradition that assigns to the pastor exclusive rights to preach has deprived the laity of its legitimate role of ministry. The work of the layman and the work of the minister should be viewed as synonymous. Yet, the majority in the 'comfortable pew' of denominational 'Do-Nothingsville' sit uneasy and restless.³

A Church that robs its laikoi of their ministries is doomed to experience a broken connection between itself and life as actually lived. Oldham advocates that a radical new understanding of the place and function of the laikoi of the Church is needed in order to provide a biblical basis for an understanding of the Church's ministry and mission.⁴ Ellen G. White is faithful to the New Testament concept that the believers of the Church are workers for God when she writes that "the greatest help that can be given our people is to teach them to work for God,"⁵ Edwards

¹Edwards, p. 13.

²Arnold Come, Agents of Reconciliation (Philadelphia; Westminster Press, 1966), p. 99.

³Edwards, p. 12.

⁴J. H. Oldham, Life is Commitment (New York; Association Press, 1952), pp. 97-8.

⁵White, Testimonies, 7:19.

says also: "Today's pastor will find his life only by losing it in the ministries of his lay people."¹

Mission is the Church's business. Gottfried Oosterwall writes;

Christ established His Church for a missionary purpose. Its whole life and liturgy, work and worship, therefore, has a missionary intention if not a missionary dimension. Mission is the Church's very *raison d'être*. God has claimed for His own the members of the Church--the people whom God, through His Holy Spirit, has called out of darkness into His marvelous light--to proclaim His glory.²

In mission the Church participates in God's own mission that is "His way of dealing with the problem of sin and its destructive power."³ And the goal of God's mission is the restoration of His Kingdom. For that purpose Christ was sent into the world in order to save it. Through His life He modelled the true nature of mission. He loved the people He came to serve and to save. Through His grace He called the Church into existence in order to incarnate His servanthood and His love. Thus all those who are touched by His life and receive it are ordained to work for the salvation of the world. They are co-workers with Christ.⁴

The Church as an organism should enrol all its human, material, institutional and financial resources to achieve its goal: the preaching of the Gospel to a dying world. It is in the reality of the Kingdom of God that this goal can be achieved. However the Church should not overlook the somatic realities of human existence as it seeks to save men from sin, disobedience, slavery, hatred, and injustice.

¹ Edwards, p. 16.

² Gottfried Oosterwal, Mission Possible. The Challenge of Mission Today (Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing Association, 1972), p. 69.

³ Ibid. ⁴ White, Desire of Ages, p. 822.

The scope of the Church's mission is as wide as the world. The world is the field of God's activity and saving deeds in Christ and, therefore, the field of the service of the Church. Thus the Church must not forget that it is the light, the salt of the earth (Matt 5:13). As such "it can fulfil this function only when its members become scattered all over the world, mingle with its people, become involved in their activities, and thereby season and save the world."¹ With regard to this, Oosterwal's warning is of great insight. He stipulates that the mission of the Church must be fulfilled not merely in crossing geographical boundaries but in crossing each "sociological, economical, political, cultural, linguistic, religious, consanguineal, racial and geographical"² frontier of the populations of the world, for the world is a mosaic of peoples, cultures, lands etc.

As God's agent, the Church must remember that true mission originates in God, not in the Church's initiative. God is the sender, the One who sends (apostellein). As God sent His angels, his prophets, and His Son to save the world, He also sends the Church. In that act of sending the Church becomes God's servant. It is in the quality of a servant that the Church's interest and life harmonize with God the Sender. Therefore the Church has the same mind as Christ (1 Cor 2:16), it expresses God's image and likeness (Col 1:15; 3:10; 2 Cor 4:4). As such the Church becomes God's most trusted servant, His doulos. As the doulos of God it has no other will but to do the will of God, the Sender.³ Hence, both sender and sent are united in the act of sending.

¹Oosterwal, p. 73. ²Ibid. ³Ibid., p. 89.

Oosterwal has well made the point that the true task of mission is the "reconciliation, the restoration of the union between God and man."¹ In that context the hallmark of the missionary, according to Oosterwal, "is that he represents Christ among people who do not know Him in order to bring about a union between God and man and to restore the broken relationship between men and fellowmen."²

Having been called into existence for a saving purpose and ministry to the world the Church cannot isolate and shut itself from the latter. "The world is our destination, not something we must ignore or flee from."³

In summary an understanding of the nature of the Church's mission is centered upon the significance of laos for the life of the ekklēsia. The New Testament faces the reality that God has chosen a laos, the ekklēsia whom He has called by His free grace and will. The whole laos gathers around the Person of Jesus Christ from whom they find their unity, fellowship and *raison d'être*. Christ as Head of His ekklēsia sustains it, nourishes it and guides its growth to maturity. For this very end He has endowed the laos with His Spirit and entrusted them with His work of reconciliation and healing. As God's representative in the world the laos have a specific role and ministry to hasten God's Kingdom. The success of this role and ministry depends largely on how the laos understand their calling as God's chosen people, a nation of priests sent to the world, and how they participate in their entrusted gifts and ministries. The hallmark of the ekklēsia as the laos of God is that it is called to salvation and is involved in mission. For God not only calls the whole Church to salvation, He also

¹Ibid., p. 90. ²Ibid. ³Ibid., p. 102.

calls the whole world.

Order in the ekklēsia

The outcome of Davies' survey of the relevant New Testament scholarship during the last seventy-five years with regard to the Church life and order shows that the New Testament itself confronts us with two alternatives;¹

Either we find, by the suspension of our critical judgement, that the Church assumes one form based on an essential ministry or determined by some other principle as the case may be, or we accept the fact that the primitive Christian movement assumed a diversity of forms.²

He opts for the second and admits that "Church life in the New Testament is a coat of many colours."³ The present writer shares the opinion that the New Testament ekklēsia is not limited to any fixed form of expression of its nature. As Davies says it can assume many forms.⁴

Davies goes on to present certain criteria to judge any form the Church may assume. He reminds us that the Christian movement did not start with a tabula rasa, that the members were members of the true Israel (an Israel that was New and Old) and "drew upon a long tradition of worship and discipline in the religious life."⁵ His statement that "behind the Church lies Judaism" is insightful, for the

¹Davies, Christian Origins, pp. 199-216. Davies examines the assumption that the New Testament presents a normative pattern for Church life. He surveys Protestant authors from the close of last century to the present age--such writers as Jenkins, Batiffol, Lightfoot, Hatch, Harnack, Robinson, Manson and Flew.

²Ibid., p. 217. ³Ibid. ⁴Ibid., p. 217. ⁵Ibid., p. 219.

Jewish synagogue supplied the Christian Church in its early days with much of its form.¹

Though there was an element of ordered life and tradition in the early Church, there was also an element of departure and spontaneity.² Furthermore as Davies argues "the worship of the Primitive Church did not conform to a single type,"³ in other words "there is no stereotyped order of worship and life presented to us in the New Testament."⁴ However this does not overlook some unvarying constants in the life of the Primitive Church, such as the Eucharist, baptism, the reading of Scripture, prayer, praise and the exposition of the Word. For instance Davies mentions Vincent Taylor for whom the Eucharist "did not everywhere and always become a central feature in the life and worship of the primitive communities."⁵

One could agree with Davies' recognition that despite the variety of Church orders and life in the early Church the essential unity of Christians was the hallmark of their existence. Being one with Christ the Church "is to restore the broken unity of the universe."⁶ This unity of the members of the Church is understood in terms of universalism. As Davies indicates:

¹Ibid. See patterns of worship: praise (1 Cor 14:26; Eph 5:9; Col 3:16); the reading of Scripture (1 Thess 5:27; 1 Tim 4:13; Col 4:16); Prayers (Acts 2:42; 1 Tim 2:1-2); the sermon (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 14:26); the Amen (1 Cor 14:16); the confession of faith. Baptism, Passover are also forms borrowed from the synagogue.

²Example of women who were allowed to pray and prophesy (1 Cor 11:4f.); also the practice of the "Holy Kiss" (Rom 16:16; 1 Cor 16:20) reveals an interchange of tradition and freedom.

³Davies, Christian Origins, p. 221. ⁴Ibid., pp. 221-2.

⁵Ibid. p. 221. ⁶Ibid., p. 222.

Nationalism, class, sex--the divisive factors of history--these 'in Christ' and in His Church in the New Testament are transcended. The unity of the Primitive Church is a unity not only in diversity of form but in universalism of life.¹

Then again Davies argues that the unity and universalism of the Church must not hide the fact that "Church order in the New Testament is an evolving order."² The ultimate criterion for judging any form the Church may assume lies in the fact that the Church has been called into being by the direct act of God in Christ. The whole Church is gathered by the call of Christ. Thus, Christ is constitutive of the Church and therefore the Church is completely dependent upon Him, and cannot limit Christ's freedom of calling.³ Davies comments:

Any Church order, therefore, which presumes to impose terms upon the sovereign freedom of Christ, which limits His activity to certain prescribed channels, episcopal or other is a denial of His sovereignty; it ignores that distinction between Christ and His Church which despite the New Testament insistence upon the solidarity of Christians with Christ, is preserved for us in the equal insistence on Christ as the Head of the Body.⁴

The above examination of Davies' survey of seventy-five years of relevant studies in the Church life has profound implications for an understanding of Church government, leadership and administration.

Implications for Church Government and Administration

The implications of the New Testament data for Church government and administration are of vital importance. The task in determining the ideal model of Church government, leadership and administration is not simply to uncover the New Testament model of

¹Ibid., p. 223. ²Ibid., p. 224. ³Ibid., p. 225.

⁴Ibid.; also Flew, p. 160.

order and government. It is evident that there was not one divinely created organism which experienced the sovereign rule of God in its midst, in and through the risen Christ, and which was yet in every way a human phenomenon embedded in time, space, and culture--as human as its incarnate Lord. The present ideal for Church government and administration is then grasped not so much by uncovering an order, but by examining the implications of the nature of the life of the organism. Thus, it is the life of the New Testament Church, not its order, that we are to seek to make a reality now in terms of our time, space, and culture.

Theologically the Church is constituted of the people of God. The question that arises with regard to Church government and administration is how does the Church incarnate this reality?

According to Richards and Hoeldtke,

The basic reality that Scripture presents is that the Church is a living organism with Jesus Christ Himself functioning as Head. In seeing Jesus as Head, we must take seriously the notion that He is not Head "emeritus." He is not some titular "Chairman of the Board" who is given nodding acknowledgment while others run His organisation. He is not the retired founder of the firm. No, God has appointed Jesus "to be head over everything for the Church, which is his body."¹

With regard to the idea of headship it is vital to note the difference between the Old and New Testament. In the Old Testament with regard to Israel's institutions headship applied to men and patterns of leadership. It was a hierarchical pattern that finds no expression in the New. For there is in the New Testament no "indication that headship refers to leaders in the body of Christ."² Moreover the New Testament Church is presented in its most dynamic way as a body,

¹ Richards and Hoeldtke, p. 14. ² Ibid., p. 17.

a living organism of which Jesus is Head and whose members are corporately and individually related to the Head. The relationship that exists between Christ and the Church is an organic rather than an institutional one. Christ is the source and origin of the Church. As its Head He sustains it, nourishes it, guides its growth and saves it. Therefore,

. . . no approach to organization and administration can reach sound conclusions apart from the recognition that, in essence, we Christians are members of a living organism. Every principle of organization must flow from this understanding; we can never be effective leaders in the Church until we realize, with Paul, that we "are the body of Christ, and each one of [us] is a part of it."¹

Any Church government and administration stands or falls with the claim that Jesus is Head of the body, that He gave Himself for it, and is Lord over it (Eph 5:27).

Important to any principle of Church government and administration is the concept that

. . . the Church as the body of Christ does not exist for itself. When the Church is gathered, its focus may be on the internal life and growth of the body. But when scattered--when in touch with the world--the body of Christ exists to carry out the continuing mission of Jesus. Because the Church is the body of Christ and through us Jesus touches the lives of those we touch, the incarnation of our Lord has a continuing form . . .²

With respect to this concept the Church is not "an organization requiring management,"² it is the calling of the spiritual leader, Christ. Therefore, government and administration in the body of Christ must in a way encourage and express the fact of peoplehood and the basic principles of order in an organism. Though the concept of organism does not deny the ideas of government and administration, it is vital to point out that "the principles of order and leadership in

¹Ibid., p. 30. ²Ibid., p. 60. ³Ibid., p. 80.

a living organism are different, and stand in contrast to the principles of order and leadership in a traditional organization."¹

In A New Face for the Church Richards reminds us that the Church should not move towards becoming a society but rather towards becoming a community characterized by interpersonal relationships, family membership and fellowship.² Therefore in considering the Church as a system that is "a set of parts coordinated to accomplish a set of goals,"³ as Arnold Kurtz suggests, Church government and administration should "create an atmosphere and provide experiences designed to help the individual see himself as a wanted, accepted, able and enjoyed member of his community with feelings, goals and ideas of his own,"⁴ Thus leadership in the body becomes body leadership.

Another dimension of Church government and administration is to help the Church open itself to the community at large in order to understand the psychological, sociological, ethical, economic and organizational realities of its milieu. Robert L. Arnott mentions three elements that are essential to a system. A system is; 1) to make all members of the community mutually interdependent (cf. 1 Cor 12; every member of the body plays a role in its unity); 2) always concerned with input and output; members of the body fellowship with each other

¹Ibid., p. 195.

²L. O. Richards, A New Face for the Church (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), p. 40.

³Cited in E. G. Giller, "Building up the Body of Christ--A Study in Church Revitalization leading to Church Growth." (D.Min. Project Report, Andrews University, 1977), p. 44.

⁴Jack Archibald, We Did This Ourselves: On Leadership in Schools (Sydney: Ashton Scholastic, 1975), p. 48.

and are also engaged in ministry to the world; (3) to help the Church function with its environment.¹

The Church does not live in isolation. It is created for service to God and the community. Therefore any Church government or administration should help the Church achieve its growth in Christ, in brotherly love, and in mission by seeking to be a reality in terms of time, space, and culture. Leadership in the Church is most productive and successful when the spiritual, cognitive, moral, affective, and social growth of the members is facilitated. To this end Church government and administration needs to understand its time, space and culture in terms of behavioral sciences and organizational theory in order to help the Church to open itself to its milieu. That is to say that any administration of the Church needs to understand the psychological, sociological, ethical, economic etc. milieu of the Church it seeks to serve, without overlooking the task of harmonising the insights gained from the milieu with the biblical concept of the Church.

Furthermore, member involvement in the Church is a means of measuring the administrative process of the Church. Dale McConkey writes;

. . . a high degree of participation usually leads to an increased feeling of ownership. Thus all members of the Church must feel that they have a major voice in determining the future of their Church and that they really 'own' the Church.² For the more people are involved in the Church "the more successful the Church will become in carrying out its mission."³

It is vital to note that the Church is a voluntary community

¹Robert L. Arnott, "Systems and Pastoral Administration," The Christian Ministry 3 (September 1972): 16.

²Dale McConkey, Management by Objectives (New York: Amacon, 1975), p. 174.

³Ibid., p. 172.

where an atmosphere of love, support and acceptance should prevail and where decisions are made by the whole community, "where communications have been sufficiently open and the group climate has been sufficiently supportive, to make everyone in the group feel that he has had his fair chance to influence the decision."¹ In other words where there is a climate which is open to free interpersonal expression of thoughts, feelings, evaluation and opinions without threatening or limiting the body of Christ, and which tolerates failure and allows mistakes without blame or fear, there is a greater integration between the emotional needs of the community and the Church's rational goals.²

Church government and administration should also provide an atmosphere where no member of the Church uses rank or influence to eliminate differences in the Church. As far as Church conflicts are concerned they should be resolved by "valid and credible data, publicly shared and communicated."³ They should be dealt with, not denied, with salience and competence.

Furthermore, the Church administrative process should be characterized by maximum clarity and interdependence so that information can be transmitted without distortion or filtration, and be relevant to all the parts of the system. However, there needs also to be adequate testing feedback mechanism to test the reality of the Church in order

¹Edgar H. Schein, Process Consultation. Its Role in Organizational Development (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1969), p. 56.

²Warren G. Bennis et al., eds., Interpersonal Dynamics (Homewood, Illinois: The Dorsey Press, 1973), p. 513.

³Ibid., p. 511.

to provide "a guide to the correction of a message so that the message is received as intended."¹ The Church must look with boldness at what is happening to itself and evaluate its government in order to face the future securely. Also it must be remembered that "all the management techniques in the world won't get Christ's job done satisfactorily," for "if we are a body, and Jesus is the Head over all things for us, then policy making, goal setting, organizing, decision making, and all the other roles of management cannot be the responsibility of the human leadership of the body."² Planning in the Church means the participation of the whole body; it means that the members understand clearly and in the simplest fashion "what the Church is, is to be and must become."³ In his book Management for Results Peter Drucker says that "the idea of business sums up the answers to three essential questions: What is our business? What should it be? What will it have to be?"⁴

To achieve the goals for their calling in Christ members of the body need to develop their allegiance, loyalty and devotion to these goals in order to implement them adequately. For this, they must be taught to get ownership of their Church process in order to "participate in deciding what shall be done and how it shall be done,"⁵ for "goals will claim more widespread allegiance if they are influenced by those who will actually be implementing them at various levels in the

¹Marvin K. Mayers, Christianity Confronts Culture (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), p. 253.

²Ibid., p. 90. ³Richards, A New Face, p. 85.

⁴Peter Drucker, Management for Results (New York: Harper and Ross, 1964), p. 199.

⁵Speed Leas and Paul Kittlaus, Church Fights, Managing Conflicts in the Local Church (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973), p. 104.

organization.¹ Donald Smith puts it this way:

Healthy individuals need the challenge of striving for worthy goals and the corollary sense of competence growing out of achieving such goals through their own efforts. A sense of competence enables one to value himself. Self-esteem, in turn, enables a person to be more open with others, releases psychological energy and encourages a person to set still higher goals.²

In other words Church government and administration should help the members of the Church to be better stewards of their time, talents, and efforts "in achieving the most desirable results for God, our Church, and ourselves."³

The concept of the 'body of Christ' helps one to understand that "charismatic, idiosyncratic or individualistic patterns of leadership will never be sufficient, on their own, to maintain sustained, functional or efficient stewardship."⁴ The Church as a body is composed of many members of whom Christ, the Head, demands trust, active and cooperative effort, mutual respect and support toward the process of growth of the whole body as well as of the individual members. Therefore Church leadership must be modelled after the pattern of Christ who nurtures the Church and ensures the spiritual, moral, social, and physical development of the members. It must be a ministry that allows involvement and participation of the whole body and promotes its faith in Christ. An atmosphere of democracy should pervade the whole administrative process of the Church in order to enhance the

¹C. Brooklyn Derr, et al., Handbook of Organizational Development in Schools (Palo Alto, California: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1972), p. 108.

²Donald P. Smith, Clergy in the Crossfire (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Westminster Press, 1974), p. 57.

³Mc Conkey, p. 171. ⁴Archibald, p. 88.

"relationship and interactions of resources and results, of efforts and achievements, of revenues and costs,"¹ in order to convert good intentions into effective commitments and insights into actions.²

The study of administration theory deals with an explanation of administrative phenomena. Successful administration does not rest only on some desirable traits possessed by administrators or on their ability to assume a formal leadership position, nor is it measured by the quality of the followers; good administration is eclectic. It comes to grips with the many legal, psychological, ethical, economic and organizational factors that help create a healthy and strong system, and seeks to realize the hopes of the individuals in this system.

In summary Church government and administration best finds its expression in the time, space and culture of the community it seeks to serve. The Church is created by Christ, for Christ and for the world. Therefore Church government and administration must lead the church into the fulfilment of its covenant privileges and ministries to the world, seeking to develop a deep appreciation of the Gospel ministry and its responsibilities and roles.

Leadership in the body of Christ is the prerogative of the Head. Human leaders are servants of Christ. Their leadership cannot be accounted for by impact alone. There must be a two-way trust and mutual respect between leaders and followers. As God's people the Church must have the type of human leadership which is in harmony with its own creation and character. There must also be opportunities

¹Drucker, p. 15. ²Ibid., p. 201.

through Church life for members to develop a deep understanding and appreciation of the organizational process of their Church.

The Church is not a business, nor a military or political organization. There exists an awesome responsibility on Church administration to encourage and exemplify sensitive and effective ministries, so that all may hear Christ say; well done good servants (cf. Luke 19: 17).

Unity, Gifts, and Ministry of the ekklēsia

It is in the light of the Church as an eschatological community that we can understand the concepts of unity, gifts, and ministry. In the New Testament these concepts find their best expression in that of the body of Christ.

When it is claimed that the Church is the eschatological community of God it is meant that God revealed His purpose in Christ in bringing the ekklēsia into a covenant relationship with Himself. The New Testament presents us with a displacement of all Israel's prophetic, priestly and kingly cultus in Jesus Christ. God's intention was that Israel might mediate between God and the other ethnē in order to unite all mankind in Him.

Unity of the ekklēsia

With regard to the realization of the unity of all humanity in God, C. H. Dodd has summarized the purpose of the Church as it is expressed in Ephesians:

[The Church is regarded] as the society which embodies in history the eternal purpose of God revealed in Christ. This purpose is the ultimate unity of all being in Him. While in the universe at large there are still unreconciled powers affronting the sovereignty of God, the ultimate issue is certain. God has determined to "sum up all things in Christ." That might be pure speculation, but for the

fact that history and experience witness to the reconciling power of Christ in the creation of that supernatural society in which warring sections of the human race are perfectly reconciled into a whole of harmoniously functioning parts--the Church. That Jews and Gentiles should have found their place in the unity of the Church seems to the writer the most signal manifestation of reconciling grace. The enmity of Jew and Gentile was one of the fiercest in the ancient world; and the unity of Jewish and Gentile Christians in the one Church a mystery and a miracle. He saw that the reconciliation was not accomplished by any kind of compromise between the diverse parties, but by a divine act creating out of both one new humanity. This new humanity is mediated by Christ. He sums up in Himself the whole meaning of God, and communicates Himself to men so that humanity may come to realize and express that meaning. The Church is 'in Christ'; it is His body, and its members have 'put on' the new humanity which is Christ in them (2:11-27) . . . In the great universe, too, there is movement toward unity and completeness; Christ's work will not be done till the whole universe is one in Him, to the Glory of God. The living and growing unity of the Church is, so to speak, a sacrament of the ultimate unity of all things.¹

The Church in the New Testament is a historical, dynamic, present and organic unity. This unity is fundamental as it is an expression of the concepts of one Gospel, one Lord, one Saviour, one Spirit. The Church as an eschatological community operates in terms of an eschatological unity. As a creation of God its unity is theocentric; as a community of saved and redeemed people it is soteriological; as a body of Christians it is ecclesiological; as the temple of the Spirit it is pneumatic; as a place of worship and praise it is sacramental; as a body of ministries it is ministerial.

In Eph 2:1-18 Paul establishes the great reality that even when we were dead through our trespasses, in Christ we are made alive (vv. 5-6). In His grace He has destroyed whatever divides us and separates us from God, and raises up one new man, a Church that gathers together both Jews and Gentiles (vv. 15-16), intimately united with Him and fully acceptable to God the Father.

¹Cited in Davies, Christian Origins, p. 233.

In reality the Church is built upon Jesus Christ, the Corner Stone (v. 20) for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (v. 22). As such it is entrusted with carrying out God's purpose for human salvation (Chapter 3). As the body of Christ the Church has received a stewardship of God's grace in order to achieve the mystery of Christ, and serves as the medium of God's salvation to the world. In the Church's vocation (vv. 10-13) the individual finds his vocation.

In Ephesians 4 Paul presents the basis of the Church's unity: one body, one Spirit, one Lord; one faith, one baptism, one God and Father (vv. 4-6). The reconciling mystery of God's power that He presents in Chapter 3 is introduced here with some practical implications for the life of the Church on earth. The believers are exhorted to lead a life worthy of their calling in the body of Christ (v. 11). From verses 2 to 16 Paul explicitly lays down the basic elements that constitute the Church's unity and pleads that the members retain this calling to unity.

Gifts of the ekklēsia

The gifts in the Church are to build up (oikodomein) the body and life of the Church. They are thus to function democratically. That is to say there is no one gift above any other, but a gift functions as a gift of the Spirit only as it awakens life for the whole community. For instance the gifts of ministry, knowledge, teaching etc. are only gifts of the Spirit when they are used not to compel and become authoritative over a certain area of Church life, but when they contribute to Church life with no power of veto. Similarly, the life of the sōma is the life of the Spirit when it does not stifle the free exercise of any one of the gifts by those whom the Spirit has

chosen to exercise those gifts. Thus the ekklesia is in a true sense a demos, where the political ideal of democracy--life in accord with the wishes of the majority without curtailment of the freedom of the minority--is realised for the first time.

Chapters 12-14 of the first epistle to the Corinthians offer some rich insights into the spiritual problems in Corinth.¹ For Conzelmann they give a picture of the enthusiasm (self-edification and freedom demonstration) of the Corinthian Christians.²

Paul had reminded the Corinthians of their call "into the fellowship of [God's] Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1:9). Everything they "already have, they have in Christ, and everything they are yet to have, they have in Him as well."³

Paul's treatment of Chapter 12 has pointed out the ecstatic character of the religious experience of the Corinthians in their feeling of being carried away and overpowered by spiritual forces (v. 2). In verses 4 to 7 he establishes the rich variety and nature of the spiritual manifestations: charismata, diakonai, energēmata.⁴ These gifts are presents of Grace, for the Holy Spirit is sole Giver of spiritual things.⁵ These gifts are an expression of the sovereign rule of God and are given for the common good of the whole congregation. Any exercise of the gifts which does not acclaim that Jesus is Lord, and which goes beyond the community, sinks into enthusiasm and ceases to be a gift of the Spirit for service and

¹Bruner, pp. 285 ff. ²Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians, p. 104.

³Bruner, pp. 285-6. ⁴Ibid., p. 288.

⁵Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians, p. 208.

ministry. The work of the gifted member is to be the service of the community.¹

For Paul the variety of gifts of the body does not endanger the body's unity.² "There is no necessary contradiction between many gifts and a single Christ."³ In fact the believer is indissolubly bound to the Spirit, Christ, and other fellow believers (vv.12-13). Baptism is the event that secures this unity. It is through one Spirit. Any other baptism that overlooks the union of the believer in Christ and separates baptism into Christ from baptism into the Holy Spirit divides not only the Godhead but also the Church. For Paul the believers are baptized in one name (1 Cor 6:17; 15:45; 2 Cor 3:17-18). As Bruner says: "Baptism into the body of Christ is not a Spiritless matter upgraded later by a spiritual baptism into the Holy Spirit. For it is one Spirit, . . . who baptizes into the body of Christ."⁴

For Paul baptism into Christ means also baptism in the Spirit (cf. John 3:5; 1 Cor 6:11; Acts 2:38-39; 11:17). From this fact the Corinthians find their oneness: they belong to the one body.

However, the organic unity of the body is characterized by variety (vv. 14-31). All parts of the body are purely functional, not qualitative or spiritual.⁵ "The various parts are not in fierce competition with each other but are in rich supplementation of each other for the sake of the whole and hence for the sake of the God who has, Himself, placed each in its appropriate place."⁶

¹Bruner, p. 291,

²Ibid, ³Ibid, ⁴Ibid., p. 293.

⁵Ibid., pp. 294-5. ⁶Ibid., p. 295.

In Chapter 13 Paul takes a higher step to bound the spiritual gifts with love (agapē). Love is not "transported speech (v. 1), nor profundity (v. 2), nor sacrifice (v. 3),"¹ "love is a more basic and a less spectacular grace than all the others."² Love is not thumos, nor plusioutai but it is diakonia, it seeks the "common good."

According to Chapter 14 the goal of the Spirit is oikodomē (vv. 3, 4, 5, 12, 17, 26). The gifts that find their source in the Godhead (Chapter 12) should be expressed in love (Chapter 13) for the upbuilding of the community (Chapter 14).³ For Paul each individual member constitutes a vital and responsible part in the community's life (vv. 26-33), so that "all may learn and all be encouraged" (v. 31). Every gift in the Church is to be exercised for the larger Churchly helpfulness (vv. 1-19) with a missionary force (vv. 20-25) for the "upbuilding, encouragement and consolidation" of all.

From the Pauline lists of charismata (1 Cor 12:27-31; 1 Cor 14; Eph 4:11) certain criteria are presented in order to discern the charismata. They are confession of Christ, love and the upbuilding of the Church. According to Eph 4:7-16 (cf. 1 Pet 4: 10-11) Paul teaches that every believer was given a gift according to the measure of Christ's gift (v. 7). The gifts are to be employed for one another (1 Pet 4:10) in order that the whole body may grow to the full measure of the fulness of Christ (Eph 4:15) and that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ (1 Pet 4:11).

In summary Christ is the author of all gifts in the Church. As the body of Christ the Church is a democracy where no one gift is

¹Ibid. ²Ibid. ³Ibid., p. 297.

superior to other gifts. All the gifts of the body are to function democratically. A gift functions as a gift of the Spirit as it acclaims Christ as its source, as it is exercised in love and as it awakens life for the whole community. No single gift has power of veto over the life of the community.

Ministry of the ekklēsia

We may not assume that the charismata and the office one holds in the Church are antithetical. In fact the office arises from the ministry over a period of time. The New Testament presents an intimate relationship between charismata and ministry. However, while the charismata show basic tendencies of universality, variety, rank and permanence, one must not overlook the fact that in the new eschatological community, all believers stand as equals before God (Gal 3:27-28; 1 Cor 7; 11:12-16). They all become one body under the one God and Spirit.

When one deals with the concept of ministry in the body of Christ he is faced with the basic truth that Christ alone is truly minister (1 Pet 2:25), truly priest (Heb 2:17) and truly deacon (Luke 22:27). Hence, ministry in the body of Christ is Christ's ministry. Therefore, it is within the framework of Christ's ministry that the ekklēsia finds meaning for its ministry. This ministry can be defined adequately in terms of the Church members' relationship to Christ (Eph 1:21, 22), for Christ gave Himself for the Church. This ministry must also be an expression of the relationship of the believers to one another and in turn their relationship to the world as well as an evidence that the Church functions as a transforming community.

The idea of the Church as the laos of God brings out the concept that the Church is a corporate, communal, and collective ministry. Our assessment of the unity and gifts of the ekklēsia has already pointed out that there is no gift in the Church that is not a gift of the Spirit and no one gift is set above the other gifts. Similarly, there is no ministry that is not a ministry of the Spirit and no one ministry should be superior to other ministries.

The Christian ministry is a diakonia. This term is an important component theological structure of the New Testament which is used in the Gospels when speaking of Jesus' ministry. Hence it is a concept that is indispensable to a proper understanding of the Gospel and the Church.

Other words are used to express the concept of service and ministry. However each word presents some different emphasis. Latreia has the original meaning of physical work for wages, service; it became a cultic word in the LXX. It has the same meaning as latreuō and means "the service of God by the whole people and by the individual, both outwardly in the cultus and inwardly in the heart."¹ In the New Testament the verb latreuō has lost its cultic connotation to become a term for the inner worship of the heart (cf. Acts 24:14 f). Paul secularizes latreuein to describe the Christian walk (Rom 12:1) and uses it to express the idea of service in the world. Leitourgia is used in the LXX with a technical meaning. It is used together with the verb leitourgeo exclusively for the service of the priests and levites in the temple.²

¹K. Hess, "Latreuō", NIDNTT 3:550. Latreia is used nine times in the LXX; Exod 12:25 f; 13:5; Josh 22:27; 1 Chr 28:13; 1 Maccabees 1:43; 2:19, 22; see also Strathmann, "Latreuō," etc., TDNT 4:58-65.

²Hess, p. 551.

Both words are used in sections describing the functions and ritual of the priests.¹ But Paul breaks down this technical meaning and secularizes leitourgein to express the idea of service in the world. At the same time he makes this service a religious service.

As far as diakonia is concerned it is found about thirty-four times in the New Testament.² Paul uses it for service in the material sphere, probably because it denotes more clearly the relationship of the Church to its work. This is of great significance as the use of the term relates closely to Paul's idea of the body of Christ. According to 1 Cor 12:5 and Rom 12:7 there are various services but each service only finds meaning in the unity of the body of Christ.³

Diakonia was used most notably as a sign of koinōnia and carried the idea of 'a very personal service to another,'⁴ with love (1 Cor 16:15; Rev 2:19; cf. Acts 11:29; 12:25; Rom 15:31; 2 Cor 8:4; 9:1, 12, 13). There is a diakonia in the koinōnia of material goods which leads to a further koinōnia of heart and Spirit.⁵ The Christians live a life of solidarity and sharing (2 Cor 9:13; cf. Acts 5:4; 2 Cor 9:7) and their koinōnia (physical and spiritual) is a means of edification of the whole body of Christ (Eph 4:12).

¹See Exodus 28-39; Numbers; Chronicles; Eze 40-46. The priestly cultus was public, fixed and regulated by law.

²Not found in the Gospels except in Luke 10:40; very frequent in Paul; is also found in Acts. See H. W. Beyer, "diakoneo, diakonia, diakonos," TDNT 2: 81-93; also K. Hess, "diakoneō," NIDNTT 3:544-49.

³Hess, p. 516.

⁴Beyer, p. 81. The idea of the common meal is basic to the idea of diakonia in the New Testament (cf. Acts 6:1; 1 Cor 11:17-34).

⁵C. Tatton, "Some Studies of New Testament Diakonia," SJT 25 (November 1972): 423.

Any true diakonia finds its basic reality in the acknowledgment of the sacrifice of Christ (2 Cor 8:9; 9:12-15). Thus the believer has many opportunities for service. Every member of the body is made a steward of the manifold charismata of God.¹ Each gift belongs to the whole body and is to be discharged to the neighbour (1 Pet 4:8) in the power of God, and to God's glory (1 Pet 4:11).

The term diakonia expresses in a special way the Christian life in terms of the proclamation of the Gospel and the Christian mission in the world (Rom 11:13; 2 Cor 4:1; cf Acts 6:4; 20:24; 21:13; 2 Cor 11:8; 2 Tim 4:5, 11). It stands also for services in the community (Eph 4:12). The whole Church exists for service in the world (Eph 4:1-16). Each member of the body is a diakonos of Christ (Col 1:7), of the New Covenant (2 Cor 3:6), of righteousness (2 Cor 11:15), of the Gospel (Eph 3:7; Col 1:23; cf. 1 Cor 3:5), of the Church (Col 1:25), and of God (2 Cor 6:4).

The point is that these terms for service (i.e. latreia, leitourgia, diakonia) of the body have become non-technical and secular, and the sphere in which they are carried out is the sphere of ordinary life in the world.

It is in the sphere of the sōma that the Church finds the raison d'être of its service in the world. In diakonia the members of Christ's body take trouble to hasten the work of God in the world. The whole context of Rom 12:3 ff. and 1 Cor 12:12 ff. stresses the reality that since the Church finds its existence in Christ it is "the means whereby Christ reveals himself on earth and becomes incarnate in the world

¹Beyer, p. 86; cf. 1 Pet 4:10.

through his Spirit."¹ Kasemann also writes;

The body is destined for service and only participates in the glory of the exalted Lord in so far as it remains its instrument in earthly lowliness. For it is this which gives the Church its unique character and eschatological significance.²

To understand the body of Christ in the world is to see it in its ordinary somatic existence in the world as "the necessity and reality of existential communication"³ between Christ and the world. It is through His body, the Church, that Christ communicates His word and Spirit, and enters into contact with the world. It is through the Church as the body of Christ that diakonia is established, lived and realized.

Paul also stresses the ordinary life of the Church in the world in terms of its solidarity and unity. To live in the body of Christ is to live in unity and solidarity, and to preserve this unity and solidarity. For the whole body constitutes a priesthood of all believers for whom the world is the field of activity. Kasemann comments: "It is only the priesthood of all believers which manifests the reality of the body of Christ as his sovereignty with its universal claim."⁴

The directives for Church ministry are best summarized in 1 Pet 2:9-10. The whole Church is the laos of God, a 'chosen race', 'a royal priesthood', and a 'holy nation'. While diakonia is also used to denote a function or office in the Church, there is no strictly cultic priestly quality to the diakonia. Diakonia is a religious service which gives the members opportunity to live an ordinary life in the world. In diakonia the Church stands before Christ and the neighbour. Thus diakonia becomes a ministry to the needy in 'body, mind

¹"Kasemann, Perspectives on Paul, p. 117.

²Ibid. ³Ibid. ⁴Ibid., p. 119.

and estate'. As Gillespie points out, the ministry of the laos of God is an outward ministry to the world.¹

In summary the diakonia of the body of Christ is an interdependence of all the gifts within the body. Minear says: "all gifts and services must be regarded as essential to the one body,"² and no one can "appeal to the superiority of his gifts over that of others."³ As the Church is united by the gift of love according to the "overriding intention of the Spirit,"⁴ it lives in the world in its somatic reality. In the world the Church fulfills its responsibilities towards God and the world.

¹T. W. Gillespie, "The Laity in Biblical Perspective," T Today 36 (March 1979): 315-327.

²Minear, Images of the Church, p. 192.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 193.

CONCLUSION

At the end of this survey it may be in order to recall some of our findings. Our examination of the term laos has shown that the New Testament breaks down its technical use. In the Gospel records the term has received different emphases by the various evangelists who make no clear-cut distinction between laos and ethnos.

Matthew overlaps national Israel with the people of Jesus. Mark breaks down the technical use of laos and equates it with the mob. In Luke and Acts the laos is the initial and ultimate audience of God's messengers. It is also used here to apply to a people taken out of the ethnē independent of national and biological ties. In John both laos and ethnos refer to Israel. Here Jesus is thought of as the true vine, therefore the true Israel. The believing community finds its reality in its relationship to Jesus and in its abiding in Him.

In the rest of the New Testament, in the Pauline epistles in particular, there is the idea of transfer of laos from Israel to a new people. Within the confines of this laos there is no religious exclusivism and particularism. There is no Jew nor Greek, no free nor slave, no male nor female, all are one in Christ. Israel can no longer claim to be the exclusive people of God. The Christ-event has made it possible for the calling and creation of a new people, a laos periousios who gathers around the Messiah of Jewish expectation, the

Seed that assures the survival of the human race from total annihilation and from the catastrophe of sin.

The New Testament ekklēsia belongs to the eschatological saving deed of God in Christ, and testifies to the fact that God has called an eschatological people to mediate between Him and the world. The Ekklēsia also testifies to the fact that God controls human history and that He will bring everything to an eschatological end.

The ekklēsia is the laos par excellence in the sense that laos has lost its religious exclusivism. The New Testament ekklēsia knows no economic, social, cultural, national, or religious boundaries. Its scope is redemptive and universal, for it is created to be a community of salvation for the whole world.

In the picture of the Matthean ekklēsia Jesus focusses on a laos from beyond the boundaries of Israel, a laos which is built on and centered in Him. This laos is called to be an embodiment of the lordship of Christ in the community and in the world. In Matthew the ekklēsia is used with messianic meaning in relation to the people of Israel whose history was once the history of a people especially consecrated to God. The ekklēsia belongs to the time of the ultimate promise to the world. It is a redemptive community in the sense in which redemption governs its calling, life and order. It is historical in the sense in which history continues to have a certain meaning due to the unique saving act of Christ on the cross. For in Christ the new age has dawned but it is not yet consummated.

To the ekklēsia is given the right of 'binding and loosing'. It differs from the synagogue and the Quran sect which were highly organized, sectarian and legalistic societies, and in which exclusivism

was expressed in a lack of interest outside Israel. Unlike them the Matthean ekklēsia is involved in cross-culture and is called to a universal commission.

The idea of the ekklēsia receives more explicit treatment in Paul and the rest of the New Testament. The early Christians understood themselves in terms of a remnant, the congregation of the end of the day which awaits the imminent reign of God. They also understood themselves as within the bounds of Israel, and therefore were not conscious of any world mission. Their mission was only to Israel.

After Acts 6 there is a consciousness of a self-understanding of the Christian community as a Church. There is a movement from exclusivism to universalism, from remnant to ekklēsia. Now the ekklēsia is seen scattered all over the world and crossing national and religious boundaries.

The creation of the ekklēsia is not according to biological or religious preconditions, but it is purely an act of God's grace and will through the cross of Jesus of Nazareth. In Him God purchased a new people to serve Him and save the world from the lardship of sin.

From the beginning God intended the calling and creation of Israel as His people. This calling and creation transcends all biological and historical boundaries and finds ultimate expression in the ekklēsia--a spiritual and universal communion grounded in faith.

All those who belong to Christ are true children of Abraham. They belong to God's seed, Jesus Christ, and it is only as they belong to Christ that they are the seed that bridges the chiasm of sin, and brings hope to mankind.

As the people of God the ekklēsia is called to be a nation of priests, a holy people, whose ordinary life in the world is a life of holiness and sanctification. The members of the ekklēsia no longer live under the stocheia of the universe. In the Christ-event they are called to be what they are, holy and separate from the world, and yet they are God's instruments called to bring the offering of the world to God.

The New Testament ekklēsia is rich in images, each image contributing to the making of the whole picture and having within itself a particular focus that emphasises certain specific realities of the nature of the Church. To define the Church only in terms of one or a few of these images is to fail to see its all encompassing nature. The whole concept of the Church cannot be grasped by only one expression of itself.

From among all the images the image of the body is more complete and serves to illustrate vividly Paul's concept of Christian life in the world. However, it helps to define the nature and role of the laos. The concept of the Church as the body of Christ is developed primarily in Paul's epistles (1 Corinthians, Romans, Colossians and Ephesians). There are distinct emphases in each of these epistles: "all speak of Christ after one and the same basic pattern"¹

In Corinthians Paul seems to use the term body as a vehicle to express the situation in which the believers find themselves at the moment the grace of God in Jesus Christ reaches them. Each individual Christian finds his calling in where he stands and what he is. In Christ he receives union and unity within the sphere of the Spirit. Therefore, if he offends his body he places himself under the antithetical sphere of the

¹Barth, A Chapter on the Church, pp. 140-1.

flesh which produces sin and immorality. To be a member of the body of Christ is to have union with Christ in the Spirit. In being united with Christ the believer's body becomes the place of service for God.

The elements of the Supper are of great significance for an understanding of the body of Christ. In their participation in the one bread, the body, the believers are united to form the body of Christ. Therefore one has to examine himself before he eats the bread and drinks the cup, for the institution of the elements is an occasion for one's criterion of existence in the Church.

The nature of the body of Christ is such that there is no national, social, or historical superiority. The incorporation of the many parts in the one body brings about the abrogation of all differences between believers. Therefore there cannot be any discord in the body, for all parts have to be together for the body to function as a whole, love being the overriding ingredient of the body's life.

In Romans Paul states that the believers have died to the law as a sphere of influence through the body of Christ. They are now under the lordship of Christ and their destiny is in the Spirit. It is in the event of the cross that the believers have their existence and belong to one another, including Jews and Gentiles.

The believers are not a mass of individuals but a body in Christ. As members of the body they possess special functions and capacities in proportion to the measure of faith God has given them. In this diversity of functions unity of the members is realized as every member remains within the sphere of the function of his gift. No member of the body has an isolable existence from the rest of the body. Each must be aware of an already existing body, that of Christ, from which he draws his

existence, and from the relation that knits him to Christ.

In Colossians the body of Christ receives cosmic significance. Paul moves from a cosmological statement to a christological one. The headship of Christ over His body, the Church, finds its primary expression within the entire universe. Members of the body share in Christ's unique status as Head of the universe. In His death He unites all the members of His body, holding them together, nourishing them and knitting them together. Jews and Gentiles are united in the Headship of Christ. However there exists the possibility of any one believer falling out of touch with the source of true life and nourishment. Love is needed to give coherence to the calling in Christ.

In the Ephesians the believers have hope for heaven because God's divine power has been displayed in the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus Christ at the right hand of God. They are an embodiment of the plērōma of Christ. Here the body of Christ is not exclusive but inclusive. It embraces all those who have been reconciled by the blood of Christ. It is the place where God can live in permanent fellowship with men and where the members live in unity with one another in one Spirit, one hope, one faith, one baptism and one God.

As Head of the body Christ gave donata to the members for the perfection of the saints, the work of ministry, and for the upbuilding of the community in order that they may be one in faith and knowledge of Christ. Through the life of the Head the members are caused to coalesce and to constantly grow into an organic whole.

The understanding of the ekklēsia as the laos of God has profound implications. The purpose of God to create in Israel His people finds continued expression in the ekklēsia, a body of persons under the

kingship of Christ. The event of Christ marks the beginning of the eschatological creation of the Church as God's people, a people taken from all the ethnē of the world. To belong to this people is not a matter of birth or status: it is through faith in Christ.

Membership in the ekklēsia implies a dynamic relationship with Christ and with one another. It is a fellowship in the saving deed of God in Christ which fashions all aspects of the Christian life in the community and the world. It is only as they fellowship with Christ that the members of the body would have direction in their fellowship with one another. By incarnating Christ the believers would have something to offer to the problem of sin and to the evils of society. The claim of the Church to be the people of God and a community of ministry and mission stands or falls with its claim to be a community of fellowship in Christ.

All Christians are to be ministers and to be involved in the ministry of the Church to the world, for the world is the sphere of the Church's activity and mission. It is as it lives in ordinary somatic existence in the world that the Church can claim to be an eschatological people who mediate between God and the world. The life of the Church in the world is a life of service to God and the world.

The mission of the Church should be an incarnational ministry patterned after the life of Jesus who humbly gave Himself to the world. To save souls for Christ is the prerogative and privilege of the whole Church. Every member of the Church is called to Christ Himself in order to find his work--the salvation of his fellow men.

All laymen constitute the laos and all ministers are laymen. A Church that robs its laikoi of their ministries is doomed to experience a broken connection between itself and life as it is actually lived. The

laos of God needs to be taught how to work for God and to use its God-given gifts for the salvation of the world.

The Church should draw upon all its human, material, institutional and financial resources in order to achieve its goal of growth in Christ. The Church is called out for a saving purpose and ministry, having been called by the direct act of God in Christ.

The task of determining the ideal model of Church government and administration is not simply to uncover the New Testament model of order and government. It is evident that there was not one divinely ordained order, but a divinely created organism which experienced the sovereign rule of God in its midst, in and through the risen Christ, and which was yet in every way a human phenomenon embedded in time, space and culture--as human as its incarnate Lord.

Church government and administration should provide an atmosphere where no member of the Church uses rank or influence to control the life of the Church. The Church is created by Christ, for Christ, and for the world. Its government should set to make the members active people in mission to God.

"The solidarity of the community with all its members corresponds with the representative activity of the Christians among themselves."¹ This solidarity or unity of the Christians should call out the gifts that each has received so that each may "bear the responsibility of his gift that he comes to see it as his part in the task of representation."²

The gifts of the Church are for the building up of its body life. There is no gift above the other gifts, and each gift functions as a gift

¹"Kasemann, New Testament Questions, p. 294.

²Ibid.

of the Spirit only as it awakens life for the community. When used it is not to compel and become authoritative over a certain area of Church life. A gift is discipleship in action.¹ And "the real service for Christ begins and ends with the discipleship which has no need of publicity and does not push itself forward into the limelight."² Or "in discipleship a man remains a human being among other human beings and yet himself becomes other than he was before when he allows himself to be called by Jesus into his ministry of brotherly representation."³

It is the will of God that His Church should grow and that He should be present to empower expansion of the Church. To this end the Church is "a community of genuine lay people in which each has his own particular non-transferable function and all praise God together, each in his place."⁴

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p. 291.

³ Ibid., p. 292.

⁴ Ibid., p. 299.

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