

# OUTLINE STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES

by

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## CHAPTER NINE

### ECCLESIOLOGY

#### TOPIC ONE: THE IDEA OF THE CHURCH

The fundamental New Testament idea of the Church is brought out in the Greek verb *kalein*, signifying to call, with its derivatives and compounds.

1. *Kalein*: This Greek word, which means “to call” denotes the first act of Christ in point of time in connection with the Church: Romans 8:30; I Corinthians 1:9; II Thessalonians 2:14; I Peter 2:9.
2. *Kletoi*: This word, which means “the called,” designates the members of the Church: Romans 1:6, 7; 8:28; I Corinthians 1:1, 2; Jude 1.
3. *Kleesis*: This word, which means “calling,” denotes the peculiar vocation of the Church: Romans 11:29; I Corinthians 1:26; Ephesians 4:1, 4.
4. *Parakleetos*: This word, which is commonly translated “comforter,” designates the indwelling and informing Spirit in the *Kletoi* (the called): John 14:16, 17; Romans 8:9, 11; I Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:22.
5. *Epikalein*: This word points out the distinct and distinguishing act of the *Kletoi*—to call on Christ, i. e., to invoke Him in prayer: I Corinthians 1:1, 2; Romans 10:9, 13; Acts 22:16; Acts 9:14, 21; 7:58, 59.
6. *Parakalein*: This word points out the distinct and distinguishing act of *Kletoi* towards one another—to call to, exhort, or strengthen in the faith: Hebrews 3:13; 10:25; I Thessalonians 3:2.
7. *Ekklesia*: This word designates the company, body, or organism of the *Kletoi*, i. e., the Church: Matthew 16:18; 18:17.

**NOTE:** Gathering up the combined meanings of all these Greek words, we may say that the root idea of the Church is that of a company of believers called out from the world and indwelt by the

Spirit of God, whose special and peculiar ministry toward God is prayer, and toward one another is exhortation and consolation.

## **TOPIC TWO: THE TWOFOLD MEANING OF THE CHURCH**

There are two usages of the Greek noun *Ekkleesia* or Church in the New Testament:

I. The Church Universal, or the Family of God, a Spiritual Body, composed of believers of all ages and times who are united to God by faith in Jesus Christ: Ephesians 1:2; 3:21; Hebrews 12:23.

II. The Church Local, a Visible Body of believers united to God by faith in Jesus Christ. Of this usage of the word there are three special applications:

1. A small company in a house: Romans 16:5; Philemon
2. The Christian congregation of a town or city: I Corinthians 1:2; I Thessalonians 1:1.
3. The group of churches in a country or nation: Galatians 1:2.

**NOTE: 1.** To the above New Testament usages of the word Church we may add two later and modern meanings: namely, the branches of Christendom, as the Greek Church, the Roman Church, the Protestant Church, the Protestant Episcopal Church, the Methodist Church, etc.; and the material building in which the members of a church worship, as the First Reformed Church of Nyack, New York.

**NOTE: 2.** The word Church occurs twice in the gospels, both instances being in Matthew, and both in the future. In chap. 16:18 Christ refers to the spiritual and invisible church universal; and in chap. 18:17, He refers to the church local and visible.

As a spiritual organism, the church may be viewed in two aspects, namely: in time, Matthew 16:18, and in eternity, Ephesians 3:9-11.

When the Christian Church of a city or town is mentioned, the word *Ekkleesia* is in the singular number; when a country or nation is spoken of, the plural number is found, Acts 13:1; Galatians 1:2.

## **TOPIC THREE: THE LOCAL CHURCH**

From this point onward we shall confine our attention to the Local, or Visible Church; and it will be desirable to get a clear working definition of a New Testament church. Of these we give three.

I. The Local Church is “a body of professed believers in Christ, baptized on a credible confession of faith in Him, and associated for worship, work, and discipline” (H. G. Weston).

II. “The Local, or Individual, Church is a company of believers voluntarily united together in accordance with Christ’s laws, for the purpose of maintaining worship and observing the ordinances” (F. W. Farr).

III. A Church is a company of believers called out from the world, voluntarily joined together and meeting at stated times, among whom the Word of God is preached, discipline is administered, and the ordinances observed.

**NOTE:** There are those who would add to this definition the two ideas of regeneration and baptism; and we feel that this would be in full accord with the New Testament teaching on this subject.

#### **TOPIC FOUR: THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH**

The Church Universal and Invisible is an organism, but the Church Local and Visible is an organization. This is shown by three facts:

**1. Stated meetings.** The Apostolic Christians met regularly for worship from house to house—at first every day in the week, but later, on the first day of the week, or Sunday, which was called the Lord’s Day because it celebrated His resurrection from the grave: Acts 2:46, 47; 20:7; I Corinthians 16:2; Revelation 1:10.

**2. Election or appointment of officers:** Acts 1:15-26; Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5.

**3. Officers.** There were two officers of the local church in New Testament times, namely: the Deacon, and the Elder, or Bishop.

In post-apostolic times and in later church history, the elder and the bishop represented two distinct offices, the latter being the higher. But in the New Testament, the terms elder and bishop represent one office: Acts 20:17, 28; Philippians I Timothy 3:1 8; Titus 1:5, 7; I Peter 5:1.

- The word bishop in Greek means an overseer, and the word elder in Greek means one of adult years, possessing experience and counsel.

- The word deacon means “*minister,*” or “*helper.*”

The elder, or bishop, had oversight of the spiritual interests of the church, while the deacon was in charge of the temporalities. While both “bishop” and “elder” come from the Greek, the word “bishop” is taken from the municipal usage of Greek cities, while the word “elder” is taken from the Jewish usage of local synagogues. The date of the appointment of deacons was about 33 A. D.: Acts 6:1-6. The date of the appointment of elders was about 45 A. D.: Acts 11:30.

Two other officers of the early church may be mentioned, namely: the deaconess, Philippians 4:3; Romans 16:1; and the evangelist, Ephesians 4:11. The evangelists were itinerating preachers, not restricted to any one local church.

**NOTE:** Pastors and prophets are also mentioned among the officers of the early church: I Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11. While Agabus and the daughters of Philip predicted the future, yet the New Testament gift of prophecy corresponded to our present conception of the ministry of the true preacher of the Word: I Corinthians 14:3.

## **TOPIC FIVE: THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH**

There are three forms of church government, namely:

- 1. The Episcopal**, *or government by bishops.*
- 2. The Presbyterial**, *or government by elders.*
- 3. The Congregational**, *or government by members themselves.*

There is no rigid system of church government prescribed in the New Testament. While there are suggestions of Episcopal and Presbyterial government (Acts 20:17, 28; 14:23; Titus 1:5), yet there are indications that the Congregational form of government prevailed over the other two.

Three points may be mentioned.

- 1. Every church had the power of disciplining and excluding its members:** Matthew 18:17; I Corinthians 5:1-5; II Thessalonians 3:6.
- 2. Each church elected its own officers:** Acts 1:26; 6:1-6.
- 3. Each church had the power of determining all matters not already determined by the Scriptures:** I Corinthians 11:34.

## **TOPIC SIX: THE WORSHIP OF THE EARLY CHURCH**

There were seven features in the public worship of the early church, namely:

- 1. Praise** (Singing).
- 2. Prayer.**
- 3. Prophecy**, I Corinthians 14:3.
- 4. Scripture reading with comment.**
- 5. Reading of apostolic letters.**
- 6. Collections for the poor.**
- 7. Celebration of the Lord's Supper** (weekly at first).

**NOTE:** The spirit of worship was characterized by four things.

- 1. It was humble.**
- 2. It was reverent.**
- 3. It was grateful.**
- 4. It was joyful** (Luke 24:52, 53; Acts 2:46).

## **TOPIC SEVEN: THE DISCIPLINE OF THE CHURCH**

### **I. Definition**

Discipline may be defined as the correction or expulsion by the church of one or more of its members for immorality of life, or heresy of doctrine.

## **II. Kinds of offenses**

There are two kinds of offenses of which a church member may be guilty, namely, public and private. And there are two kinds of discipline corresponding to these offenses, namely, public and private.

## **III. Forms of Discipline**

Church discipline, whether private or public, may take one of three forms.

- 1. Private reproof.**
- 2. Public reproof.**
- 3. Excommunication.**

The law of private discipline is found in Matthew 5:23, 24; 18:15-17. And the law of public discipline is found in such passages as I Corinthians 5:3-5; 5:13; II Corinthians 2:6-8; II Thessalonians 3:6.

**NOTE:** There are only three ways for a member to get out of a local church, namely: by death, dismissal by letter, and exclusion by trial or withdrawal under charges. After a church member has been excommunicated, he should be dealt with tenderly as a brother, and his restoration sought through repentance and faith.

## **TOPIC EIGHT: THE ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH**

### **I. DEFINITION**

The ordinances are those outward rites which Christ has appointed to be administered in each church as visible signs and seals of the saving truth of the Gospel.

### **II. NUMBER**

The ordinances are two in number and only two, namely, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

**NOTE:** The Church of Rome makes seven ordinances or sacraments, namely, Ordination, Confirmation, Matrimony, Extreme Unction, Penance, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper.

### **A. BAPTISM.**

#### **I. Definition**

Baptism is the initiatory rite of admission into the Christian Church. It is the symbol of union with Christ: Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15, 16.

## II. Significance

This is twofold, namely:

- 1. It is the badge of discipleship, the public confession of Christ as Saviour and Lord.**
- 2. It is the sign and seal of participation by faith in the death and resurrection of Christ.**

**NOTE:** Baptism is not the New Testament equivalent of the Old Testament rite of circumcision; for circumcision was a symbol of cleansing, while baptism is a symbol of death. The conditions of baptism and the mode of baptism, as well as the subjects of baptism, are controversial topics among Christians.

The writer feels free simply to express his personal view and conviction as to the teaching of the New Testament. In his judgment, adults and only adults are the proper subjects of baptism; repentance and faith in Christ are the essential conditions of baptism, and immersion seems to be clearly indicated by the symbolism of the ordinance: Acts 2:38-41; 8:12; Romans 6:1-4; I Corinthians 10:1, 2; Colossians 2:12.

## B. THE LORD'S SUPPER.

### I. Definition

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance instituted by Christ for observance by His followers, and consisting in the consecration of bread and wine with the words of institution and the subsequent eating and drinking of the consecrated elements. The Lord's Supper is a symbol of the believer's communion with Christ: Matthew 26:26-30; Luke 22:19, 20; I Corinthians 11:23-34.

**NOTE:** Baptism may be called the sacrament of regeneration; the Lord's Supper, the sacrament of sanctification. There are various names in use for this latter ordinance, namely: The Lord's Supper, the Communion, the Eucharist, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the Memorial Supper, and the Ordinance of the Lord's Supper.

### II. Views

There are four principal views of the Lord's Supper that are current among Christians:

**1. Transubstantiation.** This is the Roman Catholic view. It holds that through the consecration by the priest the elements of bread and wine are converted into the real body and blood of Christ. Thus the communicant partakes of Christ, physically, through the mouth, entirely apart from spiritual apprehension by faith.

**2. Consubstantiation.** This is the Lutheran view. It holds that while the bread and wine are unchanged, there is yet a real, though mystical, partaking of Christ through the mouth. This, however, is not apart from faith, but is the mystery of the sacrament and is not explainable.

**3. The Zwinglian view.** This holds that the Lord's Supper is simply a commemoration of His person and sacrifice. It is merely a memorial feast. The Lord is not present to devout feeling and spiritual apprehension, except as our departed loved ones are present, when we call them to mind and dwell upon their virtues and good deeds.

**4. The Calvinistic view.** This is the generally accepted evangelical view of the Protestant Church. Contrary to the Romanist view, it holds that there is no conversion of the elements into the real presence of Christ. Again, contrary to the Lutheran view, it holds that there is no physical partaking of Christ through the mouth. Still again, contrary to the Zwinglian view, it holds that the Lord's Supper is more than a memorial feast.

The Calvinistic view holds that after consecration the elements remain unchanged, and that apart from devout feeling and spiritual apprehension the Supper has no value. But it does maintain that through the elements, in a way that can be realized by no other means of grace, the believer is brought into vital touch with Christ, and by faith may eat His flesh and drink His blood, and thus abide in Him. The truth symbolized by the Supper is unfolded in John 6:51-58. Augustine, in the fourth century, expressed the very heart of the spiritual significance of the communion when he said, "Believe, and thou hast eaten."

## **TOPIC NINE: THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH**

The Ministry, or Mission of the Christian Church is twofold: Evangelization and Edification.

### **I. EVANGELIZATION**

Evangelization may be defined as the efforts put forth by the Church for the salvation of men from sin and error. It is the primary mission of the Church. Contrary to the postmillennial view, we are not to bring the world to Christ, but to bring Christ to the world. There is a vast difference. To preach the Gospel as a witness to all nations and to take out of them a people for Christ's name is the fundamental mission of the Church in the present dispensation: Matthew 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8; 15:14-18.

**NOTE:** There are two beautiful symbols of the ministration of the Church to the world; these are salt and light.

- Salt is a preservative, giving both savor and flavor to society.
- Light is a symbol of testimony, the witness which the Church bears to the world, both by the purity of its doctrine and the piety of its members.

### **II. EDIFICATION**

Edification may be defined as the building up of the Church in truth and grace. After sinners have been saved, they must be indoctrinated in the truth of the Scriptures and possessed and filled by the Holy Spirit. There are five agencies which contribute to the edification of the Church:

1. **The Christian Ministry**, Ephesians 4:11, 12.
2. **The Word of God**, Colossians 3:16; I Peter 2:2; Hebrews 5-14.
3. **The Holy Spirit**, Galatians 5:25; Ephesians 5:18.
4. **The Gifts of the Spirit**, I Corinthians 12:4-12.
5. **The Sacraments**.

## **TOPIC TEN: THE DESTINY OF THE CHURCH**

The Destiny of the Christian Church is threefold:

I. To be married as a chaste virgin to Christ, Revelation 21:9; II Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:27.

II. To reign with Christ as a Royal Consort, Revelation 1:6; 3:21; I Peter 2:9; Revelation 20:6.

III. To show forth throughout all the coming ages the praise, the grace, and the glory of God, Ephesians 1:6, 12; 3:10.

**NOTE:** There are three words that bring out these three relationships of the Church to Christ: Bride, Queen, Jewel.

### **QUESTIONS FOR STUDY**

1. What is the fundamental New Testament idea of the Church?
2. State as clearly as you can what the Church is, as derived from a careful study of the seven Greek words which were mentioned.
3. What are the two New Testament meanings of the Church?
4. Define a Local Church.
5. How may it be shown that the local church is an organization?
6. What are the New Testament offices of the Church?
7. According to the New Testament usage, do the words Bishop and Elder designate the same office or different offices?
8. What are the three forms of Church government?
9. Do you find Scriptural ground for any one form of government more than the others?
10. Describe the features of early Church worship.
11. What is Church discipline?
12. How many forms of Church discipline are recognized and what is the order of procedure in each?
13. What are the ordinances of the Church?
14. Define baptism.
15. What is the twofold significance of baptism?
16. Define the Lord's Supper.
17. What are some of the names used for this ordinance besides "the Lord's Supper"?
18. What is the error known as Transubstantiation?
19. What is the error known as Consubstantiation?

20. What is the Zwinglian view?
21. What is the Calvinistic view?
22. What is the twofold mission of the Church?
23. What is its threefold destiny?

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