

Is the Modern Parachurch a Reflection of Misguided Ecclesiology?

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Abstract

In light of the present situation of Christianity, it has become necessary to examine the biblical basis for ministries outside the normal parameters of the Church. One of the biggest problems with addressing this issue is that of defining the parachurch. An accurate and sufficient definition for what constitutes a parachurch ministry requires an investigation into biblical ecclesiology. The relationship between parachurch ministries and the local and universal church must be established in a time when the lines between them are blurred. Some basic principles need to be established which describe what constitutes a biblical reason for the creation of parachurch ministries, what guidelines those ministries should follow, and what type of relationship they should maintain with local churches.

IS THE MODERN PARACHURCH A RESULT OF MISGUIDED ECCLESIOLOGY?

As the Church moves into the 21st century, it has come to a point where the form, function, and purpose of its existence has come under scrutiny from both outside and within. The anti-institutionalism that has pervaded much of Western society in the 20th century continues to challenge the church and shape the way that it interacts with the world. One of the areas where the shift of the Church as an institution was most clearly seen is in the rise of parachurch ministries. As recent as 2000, the combined estimated budget of parachurch organizations was \$22 billion.¹ Their existence and influence on the world today is impossible to ignore; however, on what basis or authority do they function? This study is important in establishing a clear and biblical ecclesiology in a day and age where the Church as an institution seems to be questioning its purpose and role in addition to mounting criticism from outside. The parachurch movement in many ways has sought to accomplish some of the responsibilities of the Church where the Church has been accused of failing, and perhaps rightfully so, but the continued attempt to remedy a problem with a solution that may not be in line with biblical examples and commands would seem to be a contradiction of sorts unless the parachurch is in fact a biblical response. The hope of this study is to clarify issues between the Church and the parachurch and establish a strong, biblical ecclesiology of the role and relationship that

¹Martin E. Marty, "Will success spoil evangelicalism?" *Christian Century* (2000): 757-761.

parachurch organizations have within the body of Christ, to eliminate division and strife and to encourage unity and love for the glory of God.

THE CHURCH VS. THE PARACHURCH

The greatest difficulty when addressing this issue, is in the ability to define the Church and the parachurch. Through 2,000 years of its existence the Church has changed quite dramatically in its form and even function in some instances. Comparatively, the parachurch of the modern age has had a much shorter life, but it in fact will prove more difficult to define than the Church. The Church has scriptural guidelines whereas the parachurch does not. To better understand this issue, one must first provide a clear and thorough definition for both the Church and the parachurch. Only after examining and defining basic principles of these two entities can discussion begin on their relationship or lack thereof. Since it is evident that the parachurch has come from the Church, the Church must be defined first.

Defining the Church

One of the issues with the term *church* is that it encompasses ideas and elements that are just too large for one word and therefore it has various meaning and nuances. Merriam-Webster gives five different definitions including the church as a building, the clergy, the body of believers, public worship, and the clerical profession. All of these definitions are clearly centered on the third definition above, which is appropriately given subdivisions as, the entire body of believers, a denomination, and an individual congregation.²

²“church,” in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003)

The word church most likely originated from the Greek term *kuriakon* in reference to the Church belonging to the Lord. This term was used synonymously with the Greek *ekklesia* in the early church; however, the description of the Church is not limited to this one word. The Church is also recognized in the New Testament as the body of Christ (Rom. 7:4, 1 Cor. 10:16, Eph. 4:12, NASB), a household of faith (Gal. 6:10), the household of God (1 Tim. 3:15, 1 Pet. 4:17) along with other conceptual references. This being said, *ekklesia* is the most common, which is why it will be the focus of the brief word study below.

In biblical reference, the term church refers to the whole body of believers, which is considered the invisible church, but it is also used in terms of the visible church, which can consist of a gathering of any number of believers, the specific identifiable group of believers in a given area, and also the recognized body of believers worldwide.³ The Church therefore has two main areas of definition, that which is visible, and that which is invisible. The membership of the church invisible cannot be fully known in that the professed salvation of certain individuals may not indeed be a true profession; and, therefore, within the church visible, there will be some who are in fact not members of the church invisible which is the true Bride of Christ.⁴

Two forms were added to the umbrella term of church later in the history of Christianity when the term began to define the individual denominations of the church universal and also the edifice of the church.⁵ This is seen occurring during the

³Mathew George Easton, "Church," in *Easton's Bible Dictionary* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996)

⁴Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 855.

institutionalizing of the church early during times of persecution, but especially during and after the time of Constantine when the church began to be recognized as a legitimate religious organization and even received support from the empire in the form of imperial funded buildings and clergy. Some adherents to the universal (catholic) church demanded the true church was in fact confined to the visible, catholic body. Augustine condemned those who remained in fellowship outside of the catholic body including both heretics and schismatics.⁶ This was done under the premise of maintaining unity within the body of believers, and while there was good foundation for condemning the heretics, the condemnation of the schismatics should fall under a different category. A contradiction is seen in that there is a failure of accountability and the lack of a system of checks and balances that would prevent the catholic church from being corrupted from the inside. The results of this are seen later in history. Not that schismatics were in the right to separate themselves from the church, but they may not have been completely in the wrong. This same issue is seen today in the existence of hundreds if not thousands of varying denominations throughout the world. This brings about the question as to whether or not the divisions among the body of Christ are biblical and justifiable. It also asks the question, Has the Church today begun to recognize itself more with what makes each individual church different or is it defining itself upon that which brought it into being in the first place? The issue has much to deal with the purpose and existence of the Parachurch. How is the Parachurch different from the schismatics who disagreed with the established church? What is there to be said in fighting for unity within the Church? There must be biblical principles that can be applied to this situation that will define the

⁶Philip Schaff and David Schley Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 7.

appropriate way to disagree as Christians. It would seem that many of these issues point back to a poor ecclesiology, one that has failed to define the purpose, function, and role of the Church as it should biblically or has simply failed to maintain a biblical position.

What is the *ekklesia*?

In order to understand what the church really is an investigation is required into how Christ, the Apostles, and the believers of the New Testament church described it. In the New Testament, only one word is translated as *church*. This term is *ekklesia*. This is not to say that the places where *ekklesia* is found in the New Testament are the only references to the church, but recognizing the choice to use this term as the main defining term of the body of Christ is valuable to this discussion. This Greek word is used to describe an assembly or gathering. The term is used in other Greek sources to refer to a legislative assembly, but it is also used throughout the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, to refer to an assembly or congregation.⁷ The evidence of the body of Christians seeking to structure themselves in an efficient manner can be seen through their choice of words to define themselves. The editors of Bauer, Danker, Arndt and Gingrich (BDAG) give two reasons for the adoption of *ekklesia*: “to affirm continuity with Israel through use of a term found in Greek translations of the Hebrew Scriptures, and to allay any suspicion, esp. in political circles, that Christians were a disorderly group.”⁸ Due to the laws of the Roman Empire concerning religion, secret meetings and

⁶Ibid.

⁷William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 303.

⁸Ibid.

gatherings were forbidden.⁹ The early believers first identified themselves with Judaism. The adoption of the term *ekklesia* confirms this because the term was used in the Septuagint to refer to religious assemblies such as in Deut. 31:30 and Judges 20:2. This identification served the two purposes mentioned above, which both protected them from the governing authorities and helped their witness as they sought not to divide themselves from Israel, but show the fulfillment of God's purposes through Christ. It is in this context that the word is seen being used throughout the New Testament. The connection between the Old Testament references must have been kept in mind whenever the authors of the New Testament letters penned their words.

The use of the word *ekklesia* in the New Testament is interesting. Results from a Logos word study show that the word appears in the New Testament a total of 114 times.¹⁰ The New American Standard uses 3 different words to translate into the English all of which were mentioned above. Church or churches is used 109 times of the 114, assembly is used 3 times and congregation is used twice.¹¹ In regards to semantic domains, *ekklesia* is divided into 3 categories. Seventy-three uses of the word fall under the category referring to an individual congregation or a specific body of believers.¹² Thirty-seven refer to the universal body of believers, and four are used to reference a gathering of people for political or legal reasons with 3 of these coming from Acts 19

⁹James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 73.

¹⁰See Appendix A.

¹¹See Appendix B.

¹²Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition (New York: United Bible societies, 1996), 125, 132.

during the riot at Ephesus.¹³ This observance shows the dual use of the term in the form of the church universal and local. The use of the term to address individual gatherings of believers is the more prevalent, and this is appropriate as the majority of the New Testament consists of letters to specific churches. The use is spread out except for the book of Acts and Revelation, and the letters to the church in Corinth and Ephesus.

The first instance in which the church is mentioned in the New Testament is Christ's own proclamation of what lay in store for the future of believers. Blomberg insists that this was not likely directed toward the future institution which has been the traditional view, but instead that given the circumstances and use of the word *ekklesia* in the Old Testament, it was more likely meant to point toward the gathering of worshippers around the Messiah, which is similar to the use of the word for the gathering of Israelites for worship in the Old Testament.¹⁴ This point supports the idea seen from BDAG earlier that the term was adopted in light of Old Testament use; however, it does not necessarily indicate that Christ did not have in mind the future institution of the church.

The largest use of *ekklesia* appears in the book of Acts. The reason for this is twofold. In Acts, the account of the birth and rapid growth of the early believers is seen, but also the establishing of individual churches throughout Judea, Samaria, and the rest of the Empire is the focus of the latter part of the book. Acts 5:11 is the first use of *ekklesia* to refer to the universal body of believers although as of now the Church does seem somewhat limited to the locality of Judea. The heavy use of *ekklesia* in regards to the universal body of believers is interesting, as the early Christians begin to see themselves as more than an assembly bound by the physical (although this is an essential aspect of

¹³Ibid.

the church) and more as an assembly before God brought together through Christ. It is through a balanced view of these two meanings that Christians are to identify themselves as a united gathering of people professing faith in Christ. In future passages it is these two distinct meanings that embody the term *ekklesia* with the one exception occurring during the passage mentioned previously in Acts 19.

It must be recognized that the early church existed first in the synagogues of the day throughout the Roman Empire.¹⁵ These are the first places that Paul would go as he traveled from town to town during his missionary journeys. The structure and style of these churches adopted was merely a continuation of the many traditions of the synagogues because, the majority of New Testament Christians did not see themselves as a new separate entity, but instead as a continuation of Judaism.¹⁶ Winter emphasizes the fact that the form and structure of the church was not sent down from heaven, but was in fact formed out of the adoption of various structures from the Jewish synagogue to the Roman burial clubs, all according to the situation of the day.¹⁷ The fact that Christians adopted structure and organization in some part from other institutions of the day both secular and religious is evident; however, there are certain aspects that are distinct characteristics of the Church. The Church is more closely defined by its purpose than it is by the form it takes, but that is not to say there are not some specific guidelines given throughout the New Testament. The forms of the ministries seen throughout the New

¹⁴Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 252-253.

¹⁵Ralph D. Winter, "The Anatomy of the Christian Mission," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (1969): 74.

¹⁶Ibid.

Testament are seen as prototypes for ministry; however, recognizing the forms seen in the New Testament does not necessarily imply freedom to interpret how the Church and its various forms and functions should exist.¹⁸ Scriptural principles are the priority in determining how Christian ministry should be structured.

Characteristics of the Church

What makes a group of Christians a church? That is the great question for which many church-goers do not have an answer. There are certain characteristics that define the church, and there are guidelines that a group of believers must follow in order to consider themselves a true Christian church. Mack Stiles defines it well.

The church is the God-ordained local assembly of believers who have committed themselves to each other. They gather regularly, they teach the Word, celebrate communion and baptism, discipline their members, establish a biblical structure of leadership, they pray and give together.¹⁹

The characteristics listed by Stiles are not exhaustive; however, they do represent foundational requirements. Mark Dever, in his book *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, suggests nine different characteristics that are required of a local church; however, he does not claim his list to be exhaustive.²⁰ Wayne Grudem points to two characteristics that define the church in the tradition of Calvin and Luther. That a true church is characterized by the “Word of God purely preached and heard” and “the Sacraments rightly administered.”²¹ The characteristics that follow are not meant to be as exhaustive

¹⁷Ibid., 76.

¹⁸Ibid., 77.

¹⁹Mack Stiles, “Nine Marks of a Healthy Parachurch Ministry,” *9 Marks eJournal* 8 (2011): 5-11.

²⁰Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2000), 10.

as Devers but are more detailed than Grudem as the goal here is to understand the characteristics of the church in light of the parachurch.

Regenerated by Christ

The Church has one characteristic that ultimately defines it, in that it consists of a group of people who have been regenerated through the grace of God by the work of Christ in His death and resurrection. (John 3:5, NASB) Those who are regenerate are no longer slaves to sin, but now they are bondservants of God. (Romans 6:16-18, NASB) Of course, the church is full of Christians; however, this statement implies that those who do not exhibit the heart, attitude and actions of a person who has been changed by the work of God in their lives are not part of the church. The idea is not for Christians to become hermits hiding from the world, but there must be a distinction between the world and the church. August Strong quotes a man named Leighton Williams commenting on the priority of regenerate church members:

We do not stand, first of all, for restricted communion, nor for immersion as the only valid form of baptism, nor for any particular theory of Scripture, but rather for a regenerate church membership. The essence of the gospel is a new life in Christ, of which Christian experience is the outworking and Christian consciousness is the witness. Christian life is as important as conversion. Faith must show itself by works. We must seek the temporal as well as spiritual salvation of men, and the salvation of society also.²²

The prospect of a church that looks no different from the world around it is a depressing one. The Church is the representative of Christ to the world. 1 Peter 2:9 calls the church to be a “holy people.” Christ’s prayer to the Father in John 17:15-17 consisted of Him asking not that God would “take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.” He reiterates, “they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify

²¹Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 865.

them in the truth; Your word is truth.” God consecrates the church for His special use. Just as Moses sanctified the instruments of the Tabernacle, believers are set apart. It is not of their own work. Believers are still the same person, yet their purpose and role has changed.²³ If the church does not adhere to this first characteristic, it ceases to be the Church of Christ.

United by Christ

The second characteristic of the Church is that of unity. The type of unity that the New Testament demands is unity of the Spirit. Christ’s words were that “there shall be one flock, one shepherd.” (John 10:16, NASB) Paul gives the believers at Philippi the command to treat each other as more important than themselves in Philippians 2. 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 displays the bringing together of all peoples into the body of Christ through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The idea of unity is a common theme throughout the New Testament.²⁴ While the New Testament’s call for unity can be seen as support for parachurch ministries and interaction between believers of different denominations, the call for unity in the New Testament is usually a call for unity within local churches.²⁵ There are instances where division will happen, but there is room for differences in ideas without division of spirit. The unity of the church is a witness to unbelievers as Jesus

²²Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Bellingham: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2004), 890.

²³James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1986), 578.

²⁴Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 876.

²⁵Aaron Menikoff, “Are parachurch ministries evil? A defense of their biblical basis and practical usefulness,” *9Marks eJournal* 8 (2011): 15-19.

himself prays, “that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.” (John 17:21)²⁶

Unity does not imply conformity either. There will be disagreements that perhaps cannot be settled. The point is that when those situations do arise that both parties recognize the common grace they have both received, and both continue to serve faithfully.²⁷

The church is to be united over the issues that are essential to the faith. Unhealthy division occurs when either side remains stubborn, or when one side refuses to acknowledge Scriptural truth, and there is no resolution other than to separate from those which have gone against the Word of God. This type of disunity is unfortunate, but it continually challenges believers to pursue truth.

Disunity from the Church is one of the foundational problems with the idea of parachurch, which distinctly describes itself as separate from the Church with the exception of some organizations that do subject themselves to the authority of a local church. The command and call for unity must be kept in mind as the purposes of the parachurch movement are examined later.

Committed to the Word of God

God has chosen the method for keeping the message of the gospel in the text of the Scriptures. A church that is truly following God will show a strong commitment to the Scriptures. The accurate and diligent exposition of the Word is crucial to the growth and strength of every church.²⁸ Nearly all of God’s work today in the progressive

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Boice, Foundations, 583.

sanctification of his saints is done through the Holy Spirit through the instrument of Scripture, His revelation to man.²⁹ “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim. 3:16-17, NASB) Paul commands Timothy, a young leader of the church, to use the Word of God revealed to build up the church, to equip it for the task at hand. The importance of the Word is evident in its numerous appearance in Paul’s exhortations to Timothy. (2 Tim. 1:14, 2:2, 2:15, 4:1-4) Without the Word of God, there will be no success in the church.

Committed to Evangelization and Discipleship

The last characteristic to be mentioned here is that of the church’s commitment to evangelization and discipleship. Neither comes without the other. Again, look back to John 17 where Christ prays that, “As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.” (John 17:17 NASB) The church is commanded to spread the gospel. The Great Commission in Matthew confirms that mission. The Church is not supposed to focus on itself; it is to be looking outward into the world in order that it might engage it with the truth of the gospel.³⁰ Evangelism then follows with discipleship, and the process continues. The outflow of proper commitment to God’s Word and the expositional teaching of it will naturally result in the fulfillment of these characteristics.³¹ All of these

²⁸Grudem, *Systematic*, 865. Dever, *9 Marks*, 25.

²⁹Grudem, *Systematic*, 580.

³⁰Ibid., 581.

³¹Dever, *9 Marks*, 25.

characteristics build on each other. This will be the defining issue between the Church and the Parachurch.

It is clear that this brief synopsis falls quite short of explaining the depth of the issue of what the Church really is.³² What can be seen from this study is that the church is a universal entity consisting of those who have placed their faith in Christ. This body is represented through the various local gatherings that call themselves churches and seek to represent the body of Christ as a whole and fulfill the responsibilities and calling set before it in Scripture. Representation through smaller, local bodies is key to that definition. Individual churches must recognize their part within the universal church as a whole following the biblical example of a selfless attitude with all recognizing the need that all share the grace of God equally in their lives so that the church can continue to be the vehicle which God uses to proclaim the truth of the gospel. With these principles in mind, let the conversation transition to one of the modern day vehicles of the gospel, the parachurch.

Defining the Parachurch

The *Dictionary of Christianity in America* defines it as, “Voluntary, not-for-profit associations of Christians working outside denominational control to achieve some specific ministry or social service.”³³ Jerry White further narrows the name to “para-local church,” and then defines it as “any spiritual ministry whose organization is not under the

³²For a much more extensive look at the marks that define the church, Mark Dever’s *9 Marks of a Healthy Church* and Wayne Grudem’s *Systematic Theology* are indispensable. A great resource on initiating effective discipleship and growth can be found in the book *The Trellis and the Vine* by Colin Marshall and Tony Payne.

³³D. Reid, *Dictionary of Christianity in America* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 863.

control or authority of a local congregation.”³⁴ White moves away from the idea of a universal parachurch, which is helpful, because the parachurch consists of many different types of organizations, some which are more conservative and some that are not.³⁵ The problem with White’s definition is seen in that the term parachurch supposedly means alongside the church from the Greek preposition *para* as in parallel; however, his definition puts it out of the jurisdiction of any local church authority. The definition given by the *Dictionary of Christianity in America* is not sufficient because as Hammett portrays in his thesis, being a parachurch ministry does not specifically imply being outside of denomination control.³⁶ In fact, denominational leadership such as the Southern Baptist Convention and its various ministries are classified according to Hammett as parachurch ministries. Another definition is provided in *The Prospering Parachurch*. The authors of that book define the parachurch as “organizations that are not part of the traditional, organized church, yet that are engaged in churchlike activities.”³⁷ Once again, this definition fails to provide room for denominationally affiliated organizations. It seems that it is necessary to make two separate categories of parachurch organizations, denominationally affiliated organizations and independent organizations. It is difficult to classify or draw judgments on the existence or purpose of all these organizations as a whole. Drawing a stereotype is a dangerous step to take; however, their

³⁴Jerry White, *The Church and the Parachurch: An Uneasy Marriage* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1983), 19.

³⁵ John Hammett, “Selected Parachurch Groups and Southern Baptists” (Ph.D. thesis, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1991), 4-5.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Wesley Willmer, J. David Schmidt, with Martyn Smith, *The Prospering Parachurch*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998), 12.

common characteristic is what is being brought into question. Why is there a need for organization outside of the Church?

Influences Encouraging the Growth of the Parachurch

The parachurch movement has been a result of American individualism and the American pastime of entrepreneurship. Hammett focuses on the issue of the Parachurch and Southern Baptists in his thesis, and has determined that American individualism fueled by the increase in world awareness after the World Wars and the tremendous increase in technology and communication created a tremendous amount of interest for increased ministry outside the traditional church setting.³⁸ The influence of individualism in Baptist theology from the First Great Awakening on has encouraged a focus on the importance of the individual in Baptist ecclesiology.³⁹ Individualism's effects on ecclesiology led to an emphasis on individual experience and independence of the local church. Hammett suggests the movement was heavily influenced by the ideas of democracy and independence during and after the revolution of the colonies and then further during American expansion.⁴⁰ These tendencies have been commonplace in Southern Baptist theology for the past two centuries. The doctrine of the priesthood of believers and soul competency were greatly emphasized by the movement of individualism and were promoted in defense of the independency of the local bodies. Independence is the American battle cry in many of the churches and to an extent is justifiable, but there has been an avoidance of ecclesiastical authority, with which Baptists have always had an issue.

³⁸Hammett, *Selected Parachurch Groups*, 12.

³⁹Ibid., 82.

Interestingly enough, it was under these influences that the birth and growth of the Southern Baptist Convention occurred. The convention still today has no governing authority over its members, and is instead a voluntary representative society. It is essentially one of the largest parachurch organizations existing under the authority of its representative members through both voting power and the control of funds. It is the head of the International Mission Board, North American Mission Board, and the Seminaries of the Southern Baptist Convention. This model of the parachurch is distinctly different from those that are aid organizations, social service organizations, and independent missionary boards as mentioned above and is the prime candidate for the distinction of a denominationally affiliated parachurch organization.

Modernism has also had tremendous impacts on the Church today that has led to the proliferation of parachurch type organizations. The idea that bigger is better, and the adoption and emphasis of secular methods for doing ministry are both seen throughout the landscape of today's churches and ministries. Evangelical entrepreneurship has been a slogan for the past century from Dwight L. Moody to Bill Bright.⁴¹ Numbers are big among those who praise the ever-growing plethora of organizations. Fitch's warning that "if we make bigness and efficiency a goal in itself, we may leave the church void of its original calling to be the living workings of the body of Christ before a watching world."⁴²

⁴⁰Ibid., 83.

⁴¹Michael S. Hamilton "Evangelical Entrepreneurs" *Christian History & Biography* (1992): 33.

⁴²David Fitch, *The Great Giveaway*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 38.

Parachurch organizations must organize themselves under U.S law as non-profit organizations in order to function legally. It is not that this is inherently bad, but when a ministry is built according to a business model, it cannot help but be influenced in that direction. One of the central ideas in support of parachurch organizations is their ability to meet specific individual needs, a valid argument.⁴³ However, one must recognize the dependency of independent organizations meeting a specific need on the marketing and customer base of their ministry. Also, operating outside the accountability of a local body of believers can be dangerous for the spiritual as well as the financial state of an independent ministry.

Issues of the Parachurch in Regards to the Church

Divisiveness

The claims of those who support and praise the Parachurch are often that it is a new and effective way to spread the gospel to the modern world that is more effective than what the local church body can do itself. The model of today's church cannot exactly be compared to the church of the 1st and 2nd century. The Church today is in a much different time and a different place; however, the question must be raised as to whether or not that constitutes such a radical change in the method of evangelism and the purpose of that change. Evangelism today suffers largely from the movement toward decision-making, and lacks the emphasis of discipleship. The question should be raised as to what the purpose of evangelism is outside the confines of the church if it does not seek to point converts toward the local church. Research shows that the way in which someone comes to make a decision of faith and the context in which that happens largely

⁴³Willmer, *Prospering*, 7-9.

influences whether or not he/she will become involved in a local church.⁴⁴ It is understood that the parachurch movement does not always seek to separate itself from the church doctrinally, but by definition it does seek to separate itself from the Church at least in somewhat. It should be recognized that some of the reason of the parachurch's success has been the failure of the Church; however this does not mean that the parachurch should be attempting to do the job at which the Church is failing.⁴⁵ Fred Smith states the problem rather clearly,

The parachurch movement would never have grown so large if Christian denominations could cooperate rather than compete. Today, with the proliferation of parachurch ministries, every function other than funerals, weddings, and baptisms can be done with the parachurch emphasis.⁴⁶

If and when parachurch ministries do begin to perform these functions, they are claiming the same authority as a local church, and are encouraging people to substitute involvement with a parachurch group for their involvement and commitment to a local church.⁴⁷

Christianity in the New Testament does not exist outside the Church. Examples are seen of the early Christians separating themselves from the Church in the form of the early monastic movements. Those movements and today's do have one idea in common, that man can know God, have fellowship with Him, and be sanctified by Him without the need of the fellow body of believers. This is not to say that all monks or all parachurch

⁴⁴Larry K. Weeden, *The Magnetic Fellowship: Reaching and Keeping People* (Carol Stream: Word Books, 1988), 110–111.

⁴⁵Stiles, *Healthy Parachurch*, 5.

⁴⁶Fred Smith Sr., *Leading With Integrity* (Grand Rapids: Bethany House Books, 1998), 56-58.

⁴⁷Stiles, *Healthy Parachurch*, 7.

movements hold to this mindset, but the priority of individual faith and the non-necessity of the Church is at least partially evident.

A rather large problem that results from this divisiveness is that these parachurch groups which have set themselves apart from a local church have no accountability to doctrine. While one benefit of a parachurch organization is that it can be cross-denominational by adhering to primary doctrines and not establishing a stance on secondary doctrines, the downside is that this can lead to denial or dismissal of primary doctrines.⁴⁸ The fact is that “almost no large parachurch movements that existed a hundred years ago are now found faithful to the gospel.”⁴⁹

Evangelism and Discipleship

The Church’s approach to evangelism has changed drastically in the past two centuries most evidently in Evangelicalism. This change has been both for the good and the bad. The good is that evangelicals have in large part been increasingly aware of and supportive of evangelism; the bad is that the responsibility of evangelism has in large part moved away from the Church. Over 100 new missions have been organized each decade since 1950 with the greatest growth of these being parachurch organizations independent of denomination or council control.⁵⁰ This is not meant to condemn the great works of evangelism that these organizations are doing, but the principle of mission organizations

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid, 8. One example of this trend is the Young Men’s Christian Association. The YMCA started as a ministry that upheld Christian values and was part of the Sunday School movement of the 19th century. The YMCA has gone so far as to remove “Men’s Christian Association” from their title to become “the Y” in an effort to be more tolerant to their members.

⁵⁰David S. Dockery “Christian Faith and the Christian Community,” in *Holman Bible Handbook*, ed. David S. Dockery, Trent C. Butler, Christopher L. Church et al (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1992), 892.

independent from and unaccountable to a church does not match up with biblical guidelines. As mentioned earlier, this is a tragedy for the discipleship and sanctifying of newfound believers, which should in fact be its focus. The good news is the hope of a life changed by Christ not just a decision made. The movement away from the centrality of a local body of believers is disturbing when so much of the New Testament focuses on the local church as the center of Christian conversion, education, sanctification, and accountability. Mack Stiles suggests that if there is to be a good example of a parachurch ministry, it can be found in the account of Acts 6.⁵¹ In that account the Apostles set apart men to take care of ministry that they themselves cannot do. This reflects the importance of the church's high calling of teaching and preaching.⁵²

Some parachurch organizations compare themselves or at least their purpose and function to that of the missionary band of the Apostle Paul, stating that Paul an example of parachurch functionality. His actions as recorded in Acts and his epistles would make it difficult to deny that label to an extent; however, two issues arise from that. First, Paul was an apostle, and his designation as such would make his ministry recognized as unique and not necessarily exemplary for all Christians. Secondly, Paul's ministry was the founding and discipling of local bodies of believers. This sometimes involved evangelism first such as the churches of Corinth and Ephesus in Acts 18 and 19, and sometimes involved mainly discipleship when there was already a significant body of believers such as in Rome. Either way, Paul's focus is always the spread of the gospel through the establishment of churches. Paul understood the importance that salvation is not defined by a singular decision by a believer, but instead by a lifelong commitment to

⁵¹Stiles, *Healthy Parachurch*, 6.

their Lord and Savior. Paul was also not acting out on his own. While Paul's call is directly from Christ, the leaders of the Church confirm it when he is commissioned by the church of Antioch in Acts 13, and also by the Apostles and leaders of the church in Jerusalem. Paul's apostolic call to preach the gospel to the nations should not be seen as exemplary for parachurch ministries in the sense that the parachurch is a superior calling. "The church was founded upon an apostolic and prophetic ministry (Eph. 2:21). Therefore it remains the responsibility of local churches to protect and promote apostolic teaching."⁵³

The structure seen in Acts and the rest of the New Testament is recognized by Ralph Winter as having two structures of modality and sodality.⁵⁴ The churches being established are the structure of modalities, and the missionaries being sent by those church and starting new churches make up the structure of sodalities.⁵⁵ This is helpful in recognizing the need for both types of ministries, evangelism and discipleship, but more specifically the dependency that these two entities have on each other. A parachurch ministry that is focused on the sanctification of the people they are ministering too will realize the necessity of a structure for those believers in which they will receive edification, fellowship, and accountability. The point here is not to condemn those organizations that may not fall under the principles given above but instead it is a call for

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Menikoff, *Are Parachurch Ministries Evil?* 16.

⁵⁴According to Winter a modality is "a structured fellowship in which there is no distinction of sex or age." This is the term under which he places the local church. A sodality is defined as a "structured fellowship in which membership involves an adult second decision beyond modality membership." Mission agencies and parachurch organizations fall under this category. Winter, *Anatomy*, 77.

reform and a call for a reemphasis on the importance of the local church and its involvement in evangelism and discipleship. The local church needs to be recognized more as a community of believers dedicated to each other and the pursuit of the gospel mission, and less as an institutional gathering.

WHAT IS A BIBLICAL SOLUTION?

It is understood that small churches cannot fund the efforts of some large ministries of today's world. There are many ministries that are essential and do so much for the spreading of the gospel that it is difficult to imagine cutting them out just because there are not examples given of them in the New Testament. It would be a fallacy to imply that because we do not see a group of people in the New Testament setting themselves apart to translate Scripture and other writings in the languages of the world that an organization such as Wycliffe Bible Translator has no right to exist and function.

One of the greatest tragedies of Christianity is the failure of Christians from across denominations to be at peace with each other in pursuit of the gospel mission. It may not be reasonable to insist that all independent parachurch ministries place themselves under the authority of a local church or governing ecclesiastical body. As a Southern Baptist it seems prudent to encourage the pursuit of parachurch ministries under the guidance and support of the Southern Baptist Convention as it exemplifies the idea of denominationally affiliated parachurch ministries. In regards to those independent parachurch organizations that currently exist, it would seem unwise and outrageously bold to condemn their work. Instead, encouraging these organizations to focus on true evangelism that includes discipleship, they should pursue a model similar to what Winter gives of the combined work of the modalities and sodalities of the Church in that the

⁵⁵Winter, *Anatomy*, 83-84.

local church produces Christians who go out to spread the gospel and begin more local churches which are all continuing the same process which results in exponential growth of the spreading of the gospel to the lost world. Parachurch ministries should be the tools and representatives of local churches. In this sense, they would be less like parachurches and more like the outreach of the Church itself. Wayne Grudem is right when he insists that parachurch may be a poor term to use in the first place; however, this claim is made with the understanding that parachurch organizations are still a part of the universal Church.⁵⁶ Those who work for a parachurch organization may be part of the universal church, but the parachurch organization by definition has identified itself as separate from the Church. This is an important difference.

Parachurch organizations exist through the work of Christians who are or at least should be committed to a local church. Church membership is an entire other topic, but it has much to do with this issue as often participation or commitment to an organization outside the local church is substituted for commitment to the local body. The combining of resources to fund a common project is both effective and can help unify individual churches; however, the focus of bringing believers into the local Church so that they may be disciplined and prepared to produce more of the same through evangelism should be the focus of any true Christian ministry. That is an accurate description of true Great Commission Christianity being acted out. The goal of a parachurch should be, to a certain extent, to cause its extinction. If they do a great job at getting people into the church doing evangelism and discipleship, they will not be needed. To quote Carl Trueman,

⁵⁶Grudem, *Systematic*, 878.

“The parachurch exists purely and solely to serve the church in a subordinate and comparatively insignificant way.”⁵⁷

With all of this in mind, here are some foundational characteristics for Christian ministries which reside outside of the normal gathering of believers.

- 1) Any parachurch ministry should derive from within a local congregation or congregations with the support and approval, and also accountability to those congregations by either authority to hold accountable the parachurch organization or at the very least, the personal accountability of the members of the organization to their fellow brother and sisters in Christ in their own local church.
- 2) The purpose of any parachurch ministry should be to expand the Church through evangelism and discipleship through the establishment of new churches by discipling and equipping the believers. A parachurch ministry seeking to meet a specific need should still have this as their primary goal as any other ministry should be a means as to how evangelism and discipleship can be encouraged.
- 3) Any parachurch should not separate itself from the local church because it claims the local church or even the universal church cannot function effectively in evangelism. Parachurch ministries should complement and support local congregations and the Church as a whole.

CONCLUSION

In looking back it may seem that in fact, the modern parachurch is a result of misguided ecclesiology. For the past two centuries, the movement of ideals has limited the local church to a much more stagnant position in the work of the Gospel. As has been

evident throughout the definitions and examples, the actual defining of the term parachurch is difficult. Winter's model of the modality and sodality as the two redemptive tools of God may in fact describe the issue better than any other. The term parachurch describes an entity that is not a part of the church, but the issue here is an improper understanding the church. As seen above in the brief description of the church, the idea of the church is not an institution by any means and is instead characterized by both the universal and local body of believers. Any legitimate ministry is not separate from the Church if it is being carried out by true regenerated Christians. So the first issue that should be recognized is the true nature of the church as the body of Christ and not as an institution; with that in mind, apply the principles listed above. White's conclusion that parachurch should be changed to "para-local church" may in fact be a better understanding for what would constitute a ministry outside the control of a local church. That definition established with the principles listed above would seemingly be the most appropriate description for a biblical ministry outside the confines of a local body of believers.

⁵⁷Carl Trueman, "How Parachurch Ministries Go Off the Rails," *9Marks eJournal* 8 (2011): 12.

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APPENDIX A

Resource	Reference	Result	PoS	Case	Gender	Number
NA27	Matthew 16:18	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	accusative	feminine	singular
NA27	Matthew 18:17	ἐκκλησίᾳ	noun	dative	feminine	singular
NA27	Matthew 18:17	ἐκκλησίας	noun	genitive	feminine	singular
NA27	Acts 5:11	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	accusative	feminine	singular
NA27	Acts 7:38	ἐκκλησίᾳ	noun	dative	feminine	singular
NA27	Acts 8:1	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	accusative	feminine	singular
NA27	Acts 8:3	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	accusative	feminine	singular
NA27	Acts 9:31	ἐκκλησίᾳ	noun	nominative	feminine	singular
NA27	Acts 11:22	ἐκκλησίας	noun	genitive	feminine	singular
NA27	Acts 11:26	ἐκκλησίᾳ	noun	dative	feminine	singular
NA27	Acts 12:1	ἐκκλησίας	noun	genitive	feminine	singular
NA27	Acts 12:5	ἐκκλησίας	noun	genitive	feminine	singular
NA27	Acts 13:1	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	accusative	feminine	singular
NA27	Acts 14:23	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	accusative	feminine	singular
NA27	Acts 14:27	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	accusative	feminine	singular
NA27	Acts 15:3	ἐκκλησίας	noun	genitive	feminine	singular
NA27	Acts 15:4	ἐκκλησίας	noun	genitive	feminine	singular
NA27	Acts 15:22	ἐκκλησίᾳ	noun	dative	feminine	singular
NA27	Acts 15:41	ἐκκλησίας	noun	accusative	feminine	plural
NA27	Acts 16:5	ἐκκλησίαι	noun	nominative	feminine	plural
NA27	Acts 18:22	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	accusative	feminine	singular
NA27	Acts 19:32	ἐκκλησίᾳ	noun	nominative	feminine	singular
NA27	Acts 19:39	ἐκκλησίᾳ	noun	dative	feminine	singular
NA27	Acts 19:40	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	accusative	feminine	singular
NA27	Acts 20:17	ἐκκλησίας	noun	genitive	feminine	singular
NA27	Acts 20:28	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	accusative	feminine	singular
NA27	Romans 16:1	ἐκκλησίας	noun	genitive	feminine	singular
NA27	Romans 16:4	ἐκκλησίαι	noun	nominative	feminine	plural
NA27	Romans 16:5	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	accusative	feminine	singular
NA27	Romans 16:16	ἐκκλησίαι	noun	nominative	feminine	plural
NA27	Romans 16:23	ἐκκλησίας	noun	genitive	feminine	singular
NA27	1 Corinthians 1:2	ἐκκλησίᾳ	noun	dative	feminine	singular
NA27	1 Corinthians 4:17	ἐκκλησίᾳ	noun	dative	feminine	singular
NA27	1 Corinthians 6:4	ἐκκλησίᾳ	noun	dative	feminine	singular
NA27	1 Corinthians 7:17	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	dative	feminine	plural
NA27	1 Corinthians 10:32	ἐκκλησίᾳ	noun	dative	feminine	singular
NA27	1 Corinthians 11:16	ἐκκλησίαι	noun	nominative	feminine	plural
NA27	1 Corinthians 11:18	ἐκκλησίᾳ	noun	dative	feminine	singular

NA27	1 Corinthians 11:22	ἐκκλησίας	noun	genitive	feminine	singular
NA27	1 Corinthians 12:28	ἐκκλησίᾳ	noun	dative	feminine	singular
NA27	1 Corinthians 14:4	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	accusative	feminine	singular
NA27	1 Corinthians 14:5	ἐκκλησία	noun	nominative	feminine	singular
NA27	1 Corinthians 14:12	ἐκκλησίας	noun	genitive	feminine	singular
NA27	1 Corinthians 14:19	ἐκκλησίᾳ	noun	dative	feminine	singular
NA27	1 Corinthians 14:23	ἐκκλησία	noun	nominative	feminine	singular
NA27	1 Corinthians 14:28	ἐκκλησίᾳ	noun	dative	feminine	singular
NA27	1 Corinthians 14:33	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	dative	feminine	plural
NA27	1 Corinthians 14:34	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	dative	feminine	plural
NA27	1 Corinthians 14:35	ἐκκλησίᾳ	noun	dative	feminine	singular
NA27	1 Corinthians 15:9	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	accusative	feminine	singular
NA27	1 Corinthians 16:1	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	dative	feminine	plural
NA27	1 Corinthians 16:19	ἐκκλησίαι	noun	nominative	feminine	plural
NA27	1 Corinthians 16:19	ἐκκλησίᾳ	noun	dative	feminine	singular
NA27	2 Corinthians 1:1	ἐκκλησίᾳ	noun	dative	feminine	singular
NA27	2 Corinthians 8:1	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	dative	feminine	plural
NA27	2 Corinthians 8:18	ἐκκλησιῶν	noun	genitive	feminine	plural
NA27	2 Corinthians 8:19	ἐκκλησιῶν	noun	genitive	feminine	plural
NA27	2 Corinthians 8:23	ἐκκλησιῶν	noun	genitive	feminine	plural
NA27	2 Corinthians 8:24	ἐκκλησιῶν	noun	genitive	feminine	plural
NA27	2 Corinthians 11:8	ἐκκλησίας	noun	accusative	feminine	plural
NA27	2 Corinthians 11:28	ἐκκλησιῶν	noun	genitive	feminine	plural
NA27	2 Corinthians 12:13	ἐκκλησίας	noun	accusative	feminine	plural
NA27	Galatians 1:2	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	dative	feminine	plural
NA27	Galatians 1:13	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	accusative	feminine	singular
NA27	Galatians 1:22	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	dative	feminine	plural
NA27	Ephesians 1:22	ἐκκλησίᾳ	noun	dative	feminine	singular
NA27	Ephesians 3:10	ἐκκλησίας	noun	genitive	feminine	singular
NA27	Ephesians 3:21	ἐκκλησίᾳ	noun	dative	feminine	singular
NA27	Ephesians 5:23	ἐκκλησίας	noun	genitive	feminine	singular
NA27	Ephesians 5:24	ἐκκλησίᾳ	noun	nominative	feminine	singular
NA27	Ephesians 5:25	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	accusative	feminine	singular
NA27	Ephesians 5:27	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	accusative	feminine	singular
NA27	Ephesians 5:29	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	accusative	feminine	singular
NA27	Ephesians 5:32	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	accusative	feminine	singular
NA27	Philippians 3:6	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	accusative	feminine	singular
NA27	Philippians 4:15	ἐκκλησίᾳ	noun	nominative	feminine	singular
NA27	Colossians 1:18	ἐκκλησίας	noun	genitive	feminine	singular
NA27	Colossians 1:24	ἐκκλησίᾳ	noun	nominative	feminine	singular
NA27	Colossians 4:15	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	accusative	feminine	singular

NA27	Colossians 4:16	ἐκκλησία	noun	dative	feminine	singular
NA27	1 Thessalonians 1:1	ἐκκλησία	noun	dative	feminine	singular
NA27	1 Thessalonians 2:14	ἐκκλησιῶν	noun	genitive	feminine	plural
NA27	2 Thessalonians 1:1	ἐκκλησία	noun	dative	feminine	singular
NA27	2 Thessalonians 1:4	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	dative	feminine	plural
NA27	1 Timothy 3:5	ἐκκλησίας	noun	genitive	feminine	singular
NA27	1 Timothy 3:15	ἐκκλησία	noun	nominative	feminine	singular
NA27	1 Timothy 5:16	ἐκκλησία	noun	nominative	feminine	singular
NA27	Philemon 2	ἐκκλησία	noun	dative	feminine	singular
NA27	Hebrews 2:12	ἐκκλησίας	noun	genitive	feminine	singular
NA27	Hebrews 12:23	ἐκκλησία	noun	dative	feminine	singular
NA27	James 5:14	ἐκκλησίας	noun	genitive	feminine	singular
NA27	3 John 6	ἐκκλησίας	noun	genitive	feminine	singular
NA27	3 John 9	ἐκκλησία	noun	dative	feminine	singular
NA27	3 John 10	ἐκκλησίας	noun	genitive	feminine	singular
NA27	Revelation 1:4	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	dative	feminine	plural
NA27	Revelation 1:11	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	dative	feminine	plural
NA27	Revelation 1:20	ἐκκλησίαι	noun	nominative	feminine	plural
NA27	Revelation 1:20	ἐκκλησιῶν	noun	genitive	feminine	plural
NA27	Revelation 2:1	ἐκκλησίας	noun	genitive	feminine	singular
NA27	Revelation 2:7	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	dative	feminine	plural
NA27	Revelation 2:8	ἐκκλησίας	noun	genitive	feminine	singular
NA27	Revelation 2:11	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	dative	feminine	plural
NA27	Revelation 2:12	ἐκκλησίας	noun	genitive	feminine	singular
NA27	Revelation 2:17	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	dative	feminine	plural
NA27	Revelation 2:18	ἐκκλησίας	noun	genitive	feminine	singular
NA27	Revelation 2:23	ἐκκλησίαι	noun	nominative	feminine	plural
NA27	Revelation 2:29	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	dative	feminine	plural
NA27	Revelation 3:1	ἐκκλησίας	noun	genitive	feminine	singular
NA27	Revelation 3:6	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	dative	feminine	plural
NA27	Revelation 3:7	ἐκκλησίας	noun	genitive	feminine	singular
NA27	Revelation 3:13	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	dative	feminine	plural
NA27	Revelation 3:14	ἐκκλησίας	noun	genitive	feminine	singular
NA27	Revelation 3:22	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	dative	feminine	plural
NA27	Revelation 22:16	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	dative	feminine	plural

APPENDIX B

Resource	Reference	Result	Form	PoS	Number
NAS	Revelation 22:16	churches	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	plural
NAS	Revelation 3:22	churches	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	plural
NAS	Revelation 3:14	church	ἐκκλησίας	noun	singular
NAS	Revelation 3:13	churches	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	plural
NAS	Revelation 3:7	church	ἐκκλησίας	noun	singular
NAS	Revelation 3:6	churches	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	plural
NAS	Revelation 3:1	church	ἐκκλησίας	noun	singular
NAS	Revelation 2:29	churches	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	plural
NAS	Revelation 2:23	churches	ἐκκλησίαι	noun	plural
NAS	Revelation 2:18	church	ἐκκλησίας	noun	singular
NAS	Revelation 2:17	churches	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	plural
NAS	Revelation 2:12	church	ἐκκλησίας	noun	singular
NAS	Revelation 2:11	churches	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	plural
NAS	Revelation 2:8	church	ἐκκλησίας	noun	singular
NAS	Revelation 2:7	churches	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	plural
NAS	Revelation 2:1	church	ἐκκλησίας	noun	singular
NAS	Revelation 1:20	churches	ἐκκλησίαι	noun	plural
NAS	Revelation 1:20	churches	ἐκκλησιῶν	noun	plural
NAS	Revelation 1:11	churches	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	plural
NAS	Revelation 1:4	churches	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	plural
NAS	3 John 10	church	ἐκκλησίας	noun	singular
NAS	3 John 9	church	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	3 John 6	church	ἐκκλησίας	noun	singular
NAS	James 5:14	church	ἐκκλησίας	noun	singular
NAS	Hebrews 12:23	church	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	Hebrews 2:12	congregation	ἐκκλησίας	noun	singular
NAS	Philemon 2	church	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	1 Timothy 5:16	church	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	1 Timothy 3:15	church	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	1 Timothy 3:5	church	ἐκκλησίας	noun	singular
NAS	2 Thessalonians 1:4	churches	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	plural
NAS	2 Thessalonians 1:1	church	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	1 Thessalonians 2:14	churches	ἐκκλησιῶν	noun	plural
NAS	1 Thessalonians 1:1	church	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	Colossians 4:16	church	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	Colossians 4:15	church	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	singular
NAS	Colossians 1:24	church	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	Colossians 1:18	church	ἐκκλησίας	noun	singular

NAS	Philippians 4:15	church	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	Philippians 3:6	church	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	singular
NAS	Ephesians 5:32	church	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	singular
NAS	Ephesians 5:29	church	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	singular
NAS	Ephesians 5:27	church	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	singular
NAS	Ephesians 5:25	church	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	singular
NAS	Ephesians 5:24	church	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	Ephesians 5:23	church	ἐκκλησίας	noun	singular
NAS	Ephesians 3:21	church	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	Ephesians 3:10	church	ἐκκλησίας	noun	singular
NAS	Ephesians 1:22	church	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	Galatians 1:22	churches	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	plural
NAS	Galatians 1:13	church	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	singular
NAS	Galatians 1:2	churches	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	plural
NAS	2 Corinthians 12:13	churches	ἐκκλησίας	noun	plural
NAS	2 Corinthians 11:28	churches	ἐκκλησιῶν	noun	plural
NAS	2 Corinthians 11:8	churches	ἐκκλησίας	noun	plural
NAS	2 Corinthians 8:24	churches	ἐκκλησιῶν	noun	plural
NAS	2 Corinthians 8:23	churches	ἐκκλησιῶν	noun	plural
NAS	2 Corinthians 8:19	churches	ἐκκλησιῶν	noun	plural
NAS	2 Corinthians 8:18	churches	ἐκκλησιῶν	noun	plural
NAS	2 Corinthians 8:1	churches	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	plural
NAS	2 Corinthians 1:1	church	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	1 Corinthians 16:19	church	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	1 Corinthians 16:19	churches	ἐκκλησίαι	noun	plural
NAS	1 Corinthians 16:1	churches	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	plural
NAS	1 Corinthians 15:9	church	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	singular
NAS	1 Corinthians 14:35	church	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	1 Corinthians 14:34	churches	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	plural
NAS	1 Corinthians 14:33	churches	ἐκκλησίαις	noun	plural
NAS	1 Corinthians 14:28	church	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	1 Corinthians 14:23	church	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	1 Corinthians 14:19	church	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	1 Corinthians 14:12	church	ἐκκλησίας	noun	singular
NAS	1 Corinthians 14:5	church	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	1 Corinthians 14:4	church	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	singular
NAS	1 Corinthians 12:28	church	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	1 Corinthians 11:22	church	ἐκκλησίας	noun	singular
NAS	1 Corinthians 11:18	church	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	1 Corinthians 11:16	churches	ἐκκλησίαι	noun	plural
NAS	1 Corinthians 10:32	church	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular

NAS	1 Corinthians 7:17	churches	ἐκκλησίας	noun	plural
NAS	1 Corinthians 6:4	church	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	1 Corinthians 4:17	church	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	1 Corinthians 1:2	church	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	Romans 16:23	church	ἐκκλησίας	noun	singular
NAS	Romans 16:16	churches	ἐκκλησῖαι	noun	plural
NAS	Romans 16:5	church	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	singular
NAS	Romans 16:4	churches	ἐκκλησῖαι	noun	plural
NAS	Romans 16:1	church	ἐκκλησίας	noun	singular
NAS	Acts 20:28	church	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	singular
NAS	Acts 20:17	church	ἐκκλησίας	noun	singular
NAS	Acts 19:41	assembly	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	singular
NAS	Acts 19:39	assembly	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	Acts 19:32	assembly	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	Acts 18:22	church	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	singular
NAS	Acts 16:5	churches	ἐκκλησῖαι	noun	plural
NAS	Acts 15:41	churches	ἐκκλησίας	noun	plural
NAS	Acts 15:22	church	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	Acts 15:4	church	ἐκκλησίας	noun	singular
NAS	Acts 15:3	church	ἐκκλησίας	noun	singular
NAS	Acts 14:27	church	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	singular
NAS	Acts 14:23	church	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	singular
NAS	Acts 14:23	every	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	singular
NAS	Acts 13:1	church	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	singular
NAS	Acts 12:5	church	ἐκκλησίας	noun	singular
NAS	Acts 12:1	church	ἐκκλησίας	noun	singular
NAS	Acts 11:26	church	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	Acts 11:22	church	ἐκκλησίας	noun	singular
NAS	Acts 9:31	church	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	Acts 8:3	church	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	singular
NAS	Acts 8:1	church	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	singular
NAS	Acts 7:38	congregation	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	Acts 5:11	church	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	singular
NAS	Matthew 18:17	church	ἐκκλησίας	noun	singular
NAS	Matthew 18:17	church	ἐκκλησία	noun	singular
NAS	Matthew 16:18	church	ἐκκλησίαν	noun	singular