

Old Landmarkism – What is it?

Chapter 3 – 30 Minutes

INTRODUCTION

- “The Church which is at Cenchrea,” Rom. 16:1.
- “Salute...Nymphas and the Church which is in his house,” Col. 4:15.
- “All congregations were [in the 1st and 2nd centuries] independent of each other,” Giesler.
- Some marks of a true Church left out of this study for lack of space, such as:
 - The perfect equality of its ministers
 - The purely democratic and executive character of its government

FOURTH MARK: LOCAL ORGANIZATION, SINGLE CONGREGATION

There are three organizational theories concerning a Church; only one can be true

1. The Catholic or Universal Church Theory

According to this theory, there can be but one church throughout the world.

- No single congregation can be a Church in any sense.
- The Greek Catholic Church in Istanbul; the Grand Patriarch as Supreme Head
- The Roman Catholic Church in Rome; the Pope as Supreme Head
- 1) The word “church” cannot be used in the plural; there is only one in the world
- 2) The local congregations are Not churches
- 3) The whole of the church can never be assembled in one place for any purpose

2. The National or Provincial Theory

All local congregations in a nation constitute the one church of that nation.

- The Church of England is an illustration of this theory.
 - The thousands of local societies through whole empire make up the church
 - The reigning king/queen and Parliament is supreme head making laws for it
- The Old School Presbyterian Church in the U.S. conform to this theory.
 - All local bodies with presbyteries and synods constitute the one church
 - General Assembly is the central head and ruling power.
- The Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) of America also illustrate this theory.
 - There are two of these in the U.S. - MEC North and MEC South
 - The local congregations are societies to which members belong
 - Ministers belong to the Annual Conference
 - The General Conference, meeting once every four years, is THE Church
- 1) Once again, the word “Church” cannot be used in the plural
- 2) The Church cannot be gathered into one place to discipline members or observe the ordinances.

3. The Baptist, or Scriptural Theory

The Church is a local organization.

- The primitive model was a single, independent, but complete congregation.
- It receives the laws of Christ alone and executes these.
- It executes discipline only for violations of what Christ Himself has enjoined.
- It acknowledges no man or group of men as head but Christ, Who is in heaven.

PROOFS OF BAPTIST, OR SCRIPTURAL THEORY

- 1) “Ecclesia” – has but one possible, literal meaning: a local organization.
 - 2) NT Usage: 100 times as a local organization; 10 in synecdoche, part for whole
 - 3) Ecclesia in plural: used 36 times in plural: so, theories 1 and 2 were unknown
 - 4) The ecclesia was required to assemble in one place: Matt 18:17; 1 Cor. 11:18
 - Discipline, Baptism, Communion required assembled Church to administer
 - 5) Ecclesia in single city or house required the Church to be a local society.
 - 1 Cor 1:2; Acts 11:22; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; and Phil 2.
 - 6) Historical Testimony
 - Clement, 217 AD – “Church sojourning at Rome” “...sojourning at Corinth”
 - Eusebius writes that this letter of Clement was read in VERY many Churches
 - Irenaeus, 175-200 AD – wrote of “Churches” in Germany, Spain, Gaul, Egypt..
 - Tertullian, 150 AD – wrote that 3 members are sufficient to form a Church.
 - Giesler, “all congregations were independent of one another”
 - Mosheim, churches independent of each other, like little independent republics
 - Dr. Owen, for two hundred years after Christ, nothing but local congregations
- So Then, No Catholic or Protestant organization can claim the apostolic model

QUESTIONS

- 1) Name the three organizational theories of Churches.
- 2) How many of these could possibly be correct?
- 3) The Church of England is an example of which theory?
- 4) Which theory conforms to the teaching of scripture?
- 5) Name two proofs of the scriptural organizational theory.
- 6) What functions of a Church requires it to assemble in order to conduct them?
- 7) Name two testimonies from history which prove the scriptural theory.

OPTIONAL WRITING ASSIGNMENT

In three pages or less, describe the National or Provincial Theory of the Church organization and explain why it fails to conform to the teachings of the scriptures.