

Redeemer Presbyterian Church Men's Leadership Training

The Church

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RE Jeff Smith

“He can no longer have God for his Father, who has not the church for his mother”—Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (North Africa), third century. Regardless of what *Cyprian* may have meant, in what ways should *we* understand this statement to be true (biblical)? In what ways false (unbiblical)?

Scriptural names for the church:

- Old Testament: *qahal* (“the called assembly”) and *‘edhah* (“the congregation formed by the children of Israel and their representative heads”).
- New Testament: *ekklēsia* (“the called-out ones”).
- Other terms used in the N.T.:
 - The body of Christ (Eph 1:23; 1 Cor. 12:27).
 - The temple of the Holy Spirit or of God (1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:21-22; 1 Pet. 2:5).
 - The Jerusalem that is above, the new Jerusalem, or the heavenly Jerusalem (Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22; Rev. 21:2).
 - Pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15).

Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 25: Of the Church

1. The catholic or universal Church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. [*Eph. 1:10,22-23; Eph. 5:23,27,32; Col. 1:18*]
2. The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the Gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion [*1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Cor. 12:12-13; Rom. 15:9-12*]; and of their children [*1 Cor. 7:14*]: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ [*Mt. 13:47*], the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation [*Acts 2:47*].
3. Unto this catholic visible Church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints, in this life, to the end of the world: and doth, by His own presence and Spirit, according to His promise, make them effectual thereunto. [*1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11-13; Mt. 28:19-20*]
4. This catholic Church hath been sometimes more, sometimes less visible [*Rom. 11:3-4*]. And particular Churches, which are members thereof, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the Gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them [*1 Cor. 5:6-7*].

5. The purest Churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error [*1 Cor. 13:12; Mt. 13:24-30,47*]; and some have so degenerated as to become no Churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan [*Rev. 18:2*]. Nevertheless, there shall be always a Church on earth to worship God according to His will [*Mt. 16:18; Ps. 72:17; Ps. 102:28*].
6. There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ [*Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22*]. Nor can the Pope of Rome, in any sense, be head thereof ~~but is that Antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalts himself, in the Church, against Christ and all that is called God~~ [verbiage in the PCA version stricken from the 1647 original].

Many-sided character of the church:

- Militant vs. triumphant
- Visible vs. invisible
- Organism vs. institution

Attributes of the church (Nicene Creed, fourth century: “We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church”):

- One (Jn. 17:20-21)
- Holy
- Catholic
- Apostolic

The church is the divinely appointed, earthly likeness of our heavenly home, in which we learn how to live the Christian life, taste the glory and goodness of God, and lead others in doing the same.

Some “hot potatoes”:

- Is Presbyterian government the most biblical? Acts 15 (hierarchy of courts); 1 Tim. 3 (two offices); bishop=elder=pastor=overseer (Tit. 1:5-7, e.g.).
- Why only male officers? 1 Tim 2:12.
- Is formal membership optional? 1 Cor. 5:1-5,12-13; Heb. 13:17.

The verse that the American evangelical church of 2010 may need to hear most: Heb. 13:13.