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# Presbyterianism 101

ALL TO GOD'S GLORY:  
The Church (cont'd)  
(WCF 25)

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## The Christian Life: the Church

- **What do we mean by church?**
  - **Church catholic vs. Catholic Church**
    - The word *catholic* simply means *universal*
    - The Church of Rome is not part of the catholic church because of their doctrine of the Church
- I Peter 2.9-10**, *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

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## The Invisible Church (25.1)

*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.*

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### The Invisible Church (25.1)

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- **Full Number of God's People:** all nations, ages
  - No true member missing; the perfect church
  - Visible only in glory

**Ephesians 5:27**, *so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish*

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### The Invisible Church (25.1)

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- **Universal Church:** transcends all other works of God in excellence

**Eph. 1:22-23**, *And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.*

“As if a father should say, ‘my house seems empty to me when I do not see my child in it.’ A husband will say, ‘I seem only half a man when my wife is not with me.’ After the same manner God says that He does not consider himself full and perfect except by gathering us to himself and by making us all one with himself” (J. Calvin)

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### The Invisible Church (25.1)

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- **Why “Invisible”**
  - Only partly visible, even visible outlines are uncertain
  - Many appear to be part of it, but not truly

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## The Visible Church (25.2)

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*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; and of their children: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.*

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## The Visible Church (25.2)

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- **Membership:** those who are members of *invisible* church will seek out membership in *visible* church
  - Letters of NT largely written to churches, pastors
  - Believers and their children

- **Why Children:** born church members by virtue of birth or adoption into believing household

**1 Cor 7:13-15**, *If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy...*

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## The Visible Church (25.2)

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- **Commanded, Called to Gather**

- Old Covenant: Light (Cf. Psa 100, Isa. 49:6)
- New Covenant: Light to the world (cf. Matt 5)

**Luke 24:46-47**, *and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.*

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### The Visible Church (25.2)

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- **Outside of the Visible Church:** no *ordinary* possibility of salvation
  - The Church is the household, family of God
  - Rejection of Christ's bride, Christ's body is rejection of Christ
- **Membership in the Visible Church is to publicly proclaim, name, identify with Christ**

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### The Visible Church (25.2)

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- **Trans-National Institution**
  - Unlike Old Covenant Church
  - Impossible to have full union with all churches
- **Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ:** not the fullness of Kingdom of God, but its visible expression

**Matt 13:47-50,** *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

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### Gifts to the Church (25.3)

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*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.*

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### Gifts to the Church (25.3)

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- **Christ has given the Church all she needs to accomplish her mission**
  - When the church needs more than what Christ has provided, she has transcended her mission
  - Oracles: Scripture
  - Ordinances: preaching, sacraments, prayer, teaching
  - Purpose: Gather the elect from out of the world, perfect the saints who have been gathered
- **Success Guaranteed**

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“Of all the camels that have poked their unwelcome noses into the church’s tent, there is not one whose nose is so rapidly followed by the other side of the camel as that of ‘social reform.’” - T. David Gordon

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“The Church exists to call the lost into the kingdom of our lord Jesus Christ and to nourish those so called. And if she neglects that task for any otherwise noble, helpful, or good task, which of our political lobbying groups will pick up the work of the Church? Not one of them will gather the lost or nourish them by word, prayer, sacrament, and loving discipline. Only the Church is given that task and that is the task to which the Church should devote herself.” - T. David Gordon

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## Purity of the Church (24.4)

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*This catholic church hath been sometimes more, sometimes less visible. 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.*

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## Purity of the Church (24.4)

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- **Church at War:** rooting out bad doctrine, conformed to the word
- **Marks of the Church:**
  - WCF: Preaching, Sacraments, Worship
  - Alternative: Word, Sacraments, Discipline
- **Never be surprised by shenanigans:** but always be praying for Christ's church

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## The Church Will Never Perish (25.5)

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*The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated, as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless, there shall be always a church on earth, to worship God according to his will.*

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### The Church Will Never Perish (25.5)

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- **There will always be error in the visible Church**
- **Some churches do degenerate so far as they are no longer churches of Christ**
  - Corinthian Standard
  - There will always be a remnant on earth to worship the True and Living God

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### Christ the Head (25.6)

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*Although the corruption of man be such as is apt to study arguments unduly to put asunder those whom God hath joined together in marriage: yet nothing but adultery, or such wilful desertion as can no way be remedied by the Church or civil magistrate, is cause sufficient of dissolving the bond of marriage: wherein, a public and orderly course of proceeding is to be observed; and the persons concerned in it not left to their own wills and discretion, in their own case.*

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### Christ the Head (25.6)

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*There is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor can the pope of Rome, in any sense, be head thereof.*

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## Christ the Head (25.6)

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*There is no other head of the Church, but the Lord Jesus Christ; 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 exalteth himself, in the Church, against Christ and all that is called God.*

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## Christ the Head (25.6)

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### • Various Usurpers of Christ's Headship

- Church of England, Rome, Constantine
- "Vicar of Christ," "Supreme Pontiff," Papa

### • Christ is the King and Head of the Church

*Col 1:17-19, And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell...*

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