

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?
Apologetics
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0. INTRODUCTION: HOW TO APPROACH THE PROBLEM

"církev" (= church in Slovak) – κυριακη
→ Ecclesiology as a theological discipline

- *The church without spot or wrinkle (Ecclesia sine macula et ruga): Eph 5:25-27* Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle (ἐκκλησίαν, μὴ ἔχουσαν στίλον ἢ ῥυτίδα) or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish...
- Comenius *Haggæus Redivivus*:

KAPITOLA PRVNÍ Církev jest zástup lidí vybraných z světa, kteříž slovem a Duchem Božím osvíceni jsouce a tak Pána Boha svého právě znajíce a jemu podlé vyměření jeho vůle příjemně sloužíce, k věčnému s Kristem v nebi bydlení a kralování se připraví. Za kteroužto příčinou tatáž církev slove dům Boha živého, město svaté, Jeruzalém nebeský od Boha zstupující, království svatých pod nebem, království nebeské, království nepohnutélné, v němž přebývá světlo, spravedlnost, pokoj a radost v Duchu svatém ... (1) v církvi býti má jasné světlo známosti a povědomosti všech tajemství království Božího ... (2) v církvi býti má sva0000tost života, nad jiné všecky lidí ... (3) v též církvi býti má svornost dokonalá a spojení srdcí nerozdvojitelné ... KAPITOLA DRUHÁ **naproti tomu církev plna neřádů bývá, bludů totiž, roztržek a hříchů**

0.1. WHERE DO WE GET OUR DEFINITION/PICTURE OF THE CHURCH?

0.1.1. EXPERIENCE?

- Jesus Yes!, the Church No! hypocrisy; traditionalism; impracticality...

0.1.2. HISTORY?

- the Inquisition; religious wars; hatred; denominationalism...

0.1.3. SOCIOLOGY?

- Max Weber; Ernst Troeltsch...
- Rich Warren (Peter Drucker)

0.1.4. THEOLOGY?

- the new Israel? ("replacement theology")
- (1) the Word of God, (2) sacraments, (3) church discipline

0.2. HISTORICAL THEOLOGY

"No definition of the Church can be found in the ancient fathers, Eastern or Western.¹ None was given by any of the ecumenical councils, nor by any of the three ancient creeds (Apostles', Nicene, Athanasian). Indeed, no single treatise was written on what the Church is until the 14th century, when John Wycliffe wrote his *De ecclesiae* (On the church)."¹

1. THE NEW TESTAMENT

1.1. THE WORD "CHURCH"

- the word ἐκκλησία → (1) universal church, (2) local church (analogy with the body and cell) → the OT words קָהָל (145 ×) assemblage, gathering; קָהָל convocation, assembly

1.2. THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHURCH

- **Mt 16:18** And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (σὺ εἶ Πέτρος, καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ οἰκοδομήσω μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν καὶ πύλαι ᾗδου οὐ κατισχύσουσιν αὐτῆς).
- **1Cor 3:11** For no one can lay a foundation (θεμέλιος) other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ
- **2Tim 2:19** God's firm foundation (στερεὸς θεμέλιος τοῦ θεοῦ) stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."

1.3. METAPHORS OF THE CHURCH

- a flock of sheep (**Lk 12:32** "Fear not, little flock (τὸ μικρὸν ποίμνιον), for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom) **Acts 20:28** ...the flock (ποιμνιον), in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God (ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ), which he obtained with his own blood (ἦν περιεποιήσατο διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἰδίου)
- **1Cor 3:9** You are God's field, God's building (θεοῦ γεώργιον, θεοῦ οἰκοδομή ἐστε)
- **1Pt 2:9** ...you are a chosen race (γένος ἐκλεκτόν), a royal priesthood (βασιλείον ἱεράτευμα), a holy nation (ἔθνος ἅγιον), a people for his own possession (λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν), that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.
- **Mt 13:44** ...the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field
- **Mt 13:45** the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls
- **Mt 13:47** the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind

¹ GRIDER, J. K. *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, Kansas City : Beacon Hill Press, 1994, s. 469.

1.3.1. THE TEMPLE OF GOD

- **1Cor 3:16** ...you are God's temple (ναὸς θεοῦ ἐστε)...
- **Mt 18:20** ...where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them

1.3.2. THE BODY OF CHRIST

- **1Cor 12:27** you are the body of Christ and individually members of it (ὁμοίως δὲ ἐστε σῶμα Χριστοῦ καὶ μέλη ἐκ μέρους)

1.3.3. THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

- **1Cor 1:9** ...you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (ἐκλήθητε εἰς κοινωνίαν τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ)
- **Phil 2:1** ...participation in the Spirit... (εἶ τις κοινωνία πνεύματος)

2. NT PRACTICE AND LIFE OF THE CHURCH

2.1. THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

- series of **problems** and **victories**
- (1) Life in the local church (Jerusalem) Acts 2-12 (persecution ch.4, 7, 9; false Christians ch.5; social tensions ch.6)
- (2) Missions Acts 13-21 (church planting; linking with the synagogue)
- (3) Persecution Acts 22-28 (Paul in prison)

2.2. NT EPISTLES

- (1) doctrine and (2) life **integrated**...
- growth in Christ individual and corporate...

3. EARLY CENTURIES OF CHURCH HISTORY

- defense against heretical doctrines and movements
- Epistle of Jude: warning against the false teachers
- from outside the church: Gnosticism (special knowledge; initiation)
- inside the church: Montanism (AD 172; spiritual experiences; new revelations; eschatology)

3.1. FORMULA (REPLACING THE RELATIONSHIP OF FAITH)

- Apostolic Confession of Faith ("I believe" without "I trust" and "I love")
- "Jesus is Christ"; "Jesus is Lord"
 - → **sacramentalism** "...God cannot be seen or heard directly: in order that his summoning word and inviting sign may be heard and seen within history, he must convey them in a concrete, audible, and visible form. Thus he must make use of a visible means. This is what the Church is, and it is qualified for that role in proportion to its commitment to Christ."²

3.2. THE SCRIPTURES (REPLACING THE SPIRIT)

- Liturgy → Old Testament worship (**John 4:23-24** But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.)
- In 367, Athanasius lists the 27 documents of the New Testament alone, and he is quickly followed by Jerome and Augustine in the church in Europe.
- Lectionaries³ → Scripture readings (formalized) → singing liturgy

3.3. INSTITUTION (REPLACING FELLOWSHIP)

- elders → bishops/rulers

² SCHMAUS, M. *Dogma 5*, p. 3.

³ A book containing 'lessons' or portions of Scripture appointed to be read at divine service; also, the list of passages appointed to be so read.

- Clement of Rome *To the Corinthians*, 40

They therefore who make their offerings at the appointed seasons, are happy and accepted : because that obeying the commandments of the Lord, they are free from sin. " And the same care must be had of the persons that minister unto him."* For the chief Priest has his proper services ; and to the Priests their proper place is appointed ; and to the Levites appertain their proper ministries ; and the Layman is confined within the bounds of what is commanded to Laymen.

- Ignatios

To the Magnesians 2

subject to the bishop as to the grace of God, and to the presbytery as to the law of Jesus Christ

To the Magnesians 4

there are some who call a person the bishop but do everything without him. Such persons do not seem to me to be acting in good conscience, because they do not hold valid meetings in accordance with the commandment.

To the Philadephians 5

I urge you to hasten to do all things in the harmony of God, with the bishop presiding in the place of God and the presbyters in the place of the council of the apostles,

To the Smyrenans 10

Let no one do anything involving the church without the bishop. Let that eucharist be considered valid (βεβαία) that occurs under the bishop or the one to whom he entrusts it (ἐπιτροπή)

3.4. TRADITIONALISM

- [Vincent of Lérins (died c. 445)] In ipsa item catholica ecclesia magnopere curandum est, ut id teneamus, quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est; hoc est etenim vere proprieque catholicum.

Again, within the Catholic Church itself we are greatly to consider, that we hold that, which hath been believed every where, always, and of all men : for that is truly and properly Catholic (as the very force and nature of the word doth declare, which comprehendeth all things in general after an universal manner). And that shall we do if we follow universality, antiquity, consent.

4. REVIVAL AND REFORMATION

4.1. DEFINITIONS

- Francis Schaeffer: “**Reformation** refers to a restoration to pure doctrine; **revival** refers to a restoration in the Christian’s life. Reformation speaks of a return to the teachings of Scripture; revival speaks of a life brought into its proper relationship to the Holy Spirit.”⁴
- Martyn Lloyd-Jones: “The essence of a revival is that the Holy Spirit comes down upon a number of people together, upon a whole church, upon a number of churches, districts, or perhaps a whole country.”⁵

4.2. HISTORY

- Heresies(?)
- Evangelical revivals

5. TO REMEMBER

- The Church is vitally important in our thinking and in our life.
- The Church as *visible* reality must be always fully submitted to the spiritual *invisible* reality.
- Christian growth without right attitude toward the Body of Christ is greatly hampered if not impossible.

⁴ SCHAEFFER, F. *Death in the City*,

⁵ LLOYD-JONES, D. M. *Revival*,