

specifically, as though a church might restrict itself to an emphasis on worship, or evangelism, or nurture. Much as such emphasis might be needed for a time, to correct an imbalance in the church's life and ministry, no church of Jesus Christ can be defined in terms of a specialty. Every true church of Christ is a manifestation of the new people of God, composed of citizens of heaven, not of devout people forming their élite club.

Catholicity must be precious to Christians, for it means submission to the Lord of the church. He alone can build it, and he chooses for his living stones not many wise, powerful, or wealthy. It is composed of losers – those who have lost everything for Christ's sake, but have found everything in him.

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THE MARKS OF THE CHURCH

The express train that flies up the eastern coast of England and Scotland to Edinburgh rolls by wide pastures of grazing sheep and wider vistas of cold sea. Villages flash by, sometimes guarded by a castle on the hill above. A spire marks every town or village, recalling an earlier time, when each town had a church – only one.

It did not remain so. Through this same country, armies marched in the Civil War. King and Parliament struggled over the government of the nation and the form of the church. In the end, a single form of religion for Great Britain was not to be achieved. Today we can no longer designate the church by the name of the town. Letters cannot be addressed, as the apostle Paul addressed them, to 'the church of God in Corinth'.

Church attendance has shrivelled, but church groups have proliferated. Some have separated from older church bodies, while others are newly organized congregations. Many cults claim the name of Christ. If the church is a religious country club, this merely reflects the comfortable pluralism of our democratic way of life. Let the minority who feel that religion is important join with like-minded co-dependants and call the

organization whatever they please – within the range of decency.

For believers, however, the church is more than a voluntary club. It belongs to Christ, and he has warned us against false shepherds, whether they come from within or without. Some have formed organizations that consciously perverted Christian teaching and never were true churches of Christ. On the other hand, some churches were once Christian, but have departed from the faith. In the United States, the Unitarian Church has denied the deity of Christ. Although the Mormon church sprang from Christian roots, its founder Joseph Smith claimed divine revelation for new doctrines that superseded the New Testament.

More confusing are the churches whose basic beliefs are in flux. The headquarters of denominational churches have disseminated all manner of heresy, often to the distress and chagrin of congregations within their ecclesiastical fellowship. The glorified Christ said to the church at Sardis: 'I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die . . .' (Rev. 3:1b–2a). The Sardis church was on the verge of spiritual extinction, but Christ still addressed it; it might yet recover. When does an apostatizing church become apostate?

How shall we understand the spreading parachurch organizations? Some are designed to supplement and assist the churches, while others appear to be churches in all but name.

In this welter of missions, house churches, fellowships, crusades and denominations, are there any criteria that will help us to distinguish true from false churches? Would such marks also help relate other Christian groups to what we may properly call 'the church'?

Like the catholicity issue, this is not a new question. In the third century, the Novatians separated from the church, judging it apostate because it readmitted penitents who, under persecution, had offered incense to Caesar. Only fellow-separatists would they regard as members of the true church. Augustine confronted the Donatist schism, in which separatists again claimed to be the true church, and viewed the Catholic church as apostate.

The Protestant Reformation made the issue crucial once

more. Polemicists of the Counter-Reformation regarded the attributes of the church as perfectly visible marks by which the true church could be recognized. How could Protestants maintain the unity of the church apart from the Pope who, as the Vicar of Christ, bound together the body of Christ? Did not the Apostolic See guarantee the apostolicity of the church in its uninterrupted succession from Peter? As for the holiness of the church, was it not established and maintained by the infusion of sacramental grace in the Mass, administered by the priestly hierarchy? Finally, how could the Reformers claim to be the universal church of Christ when their movement was not worldwide, but confined to the countries of northern Europe?

In response, the Reformers continued to affirm the attributes of the church from the Nicene Creed. They protested, however, against the external and institutional way in which the Roman Catholic apologists interpreted them.¹ As we have seen, they pressed for a biblical and spiritual understanding of the church's attributes. Above all, the Reformers emphasized the meaning of apostolicity. To be apostolic, the church must be built upon the doctrine of the apostles (1 Cor. 3:10–11; Eph. 2:20; 3:4–5). Not the pretended *chair* of Peter, but the *teaching* of Peter was the real mark of apostolicity.

The Reformation made the gospel, not ecclesiastical organization, the test of the true church. Yet the Reformers, particularly in the Calvinistic churches, sought biblical standards for the organization of the church.

Three marks were defined in distinguishing a true church of Christ: true preaching of the Word; proper observance of the sacraments; and faithful exercise of church discipline.

John Calvin defined only the first two marks in his *Institutes*, but included discipline in the proper observance of the sacraments. He recognized that no church could perfectly match the Lord's pattern in Scripture, but his aim was to describe practical standards, standards necessarily more objective and stringent for the organized church than for individual believers. The ministry of the Word and sacraments is, he says, 'a perpetual mark and characteristic of the Church':

That is to say, that wherever *that* exists entire and uncorrupted, no errors and irregularities of conduct

form a sufficient reason for refusing the name of a Church.²

Calvin allowed for errors in preaching, so long as the 'grand doctrine of religion is not injured' and the basic articles of faith are not suppressed. Irregularities in the administration of the sacraments do not destroy the church, provided the 'legitimate institution of their Author' is not abolished or subverted.

But as soon as falsehood has made a breach in the fundamentals of religion, and the system of necessary doctrine is subverted, and the use of the sacraments fails, the certain consequence is the ruin of the church, as there is an end to a man's life when his throat is cut, or his heart is mortally wounded.³

Calvin compared the Roman Catholic marks of the church to the externalism condemned by the Old Testament prophets. The people supposed that God could never desert his temple (Je. 7:4), or reject his priesthood, but his judgment fell on those who rejected his Word. Priestly succession did not make Caiaphas a true heir of the promises when he betrayed Christ; no more does it authenticate a ministry that has forsaken the gospel for a religion of good works.⁴

The New Testament grounds the church in God's revealed truth. The apostles established the church by preaching the Scriptures and their fulfilment. The fellowship of the church in the book of Acts exists among those who continue in the apostolic teaching (Acts 2:42). The growth of the church is described by Luke as the growth of the Word (Acts 6:7; 12:24; 19:20). The ministries by which the church is built up are ministries of the Word (Eph. 4:11). The apostolicity of the church, therefore, means that the church is built on the foundation of the apostolic gospel. All other attributes of the church derive from this.

Seen as a doctrinaire commitment to formulas from the past, orthodoxy is scorned now in the religious world as well as in the secular mind. It is seen as chained to archaic ideologies insensitive to human need, and enforced in history by horrendous intolerance and oppression. Roman Catholic

orthodoxy in Spain conducted the Inquisition; Reformation orthodoxy in Geneva burned Servetus. Competing orthodoxies in Europe devastated the continent for decades. In an age of rights, orthodoxy appears to violate all freedom of choice – which is much the way the serpent presented it to Eve: 'Did God really say . . . ?' (Gn. 3:1).

Dreadful harm has indeed been done by those who have taken the sword in Christ's name, against his specific command. Yet the holocaust in Nazi Germany and Stalin's purges in the Soviet Union warn us of the even deadlier danger that lurks in the renunciation of a divine standard for thought and life. Without truth there can be no liberty, as the mind of modernity is belatedly beginning to discover. Roberto Unger has shown the bankruptcy of the liberal ideal of liberty: it cannot provide neutral and impersonal grounds for curbs on the liberty to do what you want.⁵ Before the twentieth century began, Friedrich Nietzsche saw that abandoning Christian morality removes the framework of Western culture.

The teaching of Jesus delivers us from the tyranny of arbitrary law: 'My yoke is easy and my burden is light' (Mt. 11:30). Christ calls us to take the yoke of wisdom which is the liberating truth of the gospel, the knowledge of the Father that is given by the Son. 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free' (Jn. 8:31–32).

If Christian orthodoxy turns the joy of the gospel into sour legalism, then it is not really orthodox, nor is it the apostolic proclamation. The great mark of the church is in the message it proclaims: the gospel of salvation from sin and eternal death through the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

A preacher proclaiming the gospel in a market-place does not fulfil the New Testament description of the church, however. As Calvin affirms, the gospel must be heard and heeded as well as proclaimed. There must be a community of believers showing the root of faith in the fruit of love. Jesus promised to build his assembly, his community, giving new form to the people of God (Mt. 16:18). He said that his name must be confessed before men, and he made baptism the sign of discipleship (Mt. 28:19).

Those who say that church membership is not necessary, or

even that it is unbiblical, fail to grasp what the New Testament teaches about the church and the administration of the sacraments. Jesus accompanied his promise to build his church with the gift of the keys of the kingdom. Those who do not heed the final discipline of the church are to be regarded as Gentiles and publicans, that is, as outside the membership of the community (Mt. 18:17).

The lists of names in the book of Numbers give evidence of God's concern to define membership in his people; God's book of life is the archetype of the earthly register of his people (Ex. 32:32-33; Mal. 3:16). A prophetic psalm foresees the recording of Gentile names on the rolls of Zion (Ps. 87:4-6). The names of Euodia, Syntyche and Clement, recognized members of Christ's body at Philippi, are in the book of life, according to Paul (Phil. 4:2-3). Matthias, chosen in the place of Judas, is numbered with the eleven apostles; those who were added to the church were numbered with the disciples, so that total numbers could be set down (Acts 1:26; 2:41; 4:4). Significantly, the first total of three thousand is given in connection with baptism (Acts 2:41).

Baptism is recognized as the mark of membership in Christ's community by those outside it. Some Muslim communities tolerate conversion to Christian beliefs as long as baptism does not mark adherence to the Christian church. The Reformers, therefore, made the sacraments as well as the preached Word a mark of the church.

The question is not where *our* names are written, but where *his* name is written. In baptism we are numbered among the children of God, receiving the name of our Father, written, as it were, on our foreheads (Mt. 28:19; Rev. 14:1). To be sure, the washing of God's regenerating grace is accomplished by the water of the Spirit, not that of the font, but the outward sign functions precisely because it is outward; it is the Lord's visible seal of his invisible grace.

Some sects regard themselves as too spiritual to obey the Lord's command to baptize or to remember the Lord's death at his table. An advertisement in an American TV magazine asks, 'If Christian Scientists don't break bread or drink wine, how do they hold communion?'⁶ The answer given is that 'their idea of communion isn't ritual. It's spiritual.' Two brief sentences curtly dismiss Christ's atonement, denying the gospel to which the

sacraments bear witness: 'Nothing can draw God closer to man'; and the ancient formula of self-salvation remains: 'But by discovering the true meaning of Jesus' words and works, man can – and will – draw himself closer to God.' Jesus shows us how to do it, but we (with help from Mary Baker Eddy, the movement's founder) can find our own salvation. The advertisement ends with a taunt that reveals the real reason for the Christian Science rejection of communion: 'You may find communion a lot easier to swallow.'

If the church is identified by the Word and the sacraments, church discipline uses the keys of the kingdom to maintain that identity. Baptism administered apart from any creditable profession of faith on the part of those claiming God's promise ceases to function as a mark of the church. In the setting of a national church, it may become no more than a mark of national citizenship. So, too, the Lord's Supper may be so profaned by careless disorder as to lose its meaning in identifying those who partake of the one bread as one body.

Where do we draw the line in applying the marks of the church? Formulated church orders offer practical help, but they cannot be a substitute for wisdom and love – both love that is willing to overlook faults where there is zeal for the Lord, and also love for the Lord that recognizes his zeal for his house (Jn. 2:17).

The erosion of credal commitment has created a major issue for identifying the church. The Enlightenment view of the Bible surrendered its authority and undercut credal subscription. Liberal or 'modernistic' leadership radically altered the programmes and witness of many denominations. In some cases the credal standards of the denomination have remained unchanged, though considered a dead letter. Increasingly, though, the creeds have been amended. An escape from the authority of written Scripture was crafted in the Confession of 1967, adopted by the United Presbyterian Church, USA. The Confession altered the doctrine of Scripture found in the Westminster Confession of Faith, substituting the Barthian position that the Bible contains prophetic and apostolic witness to revelation, but is not to be identified with revelation.⁷ The new Confession was included in a *Book of Confessions*, containing the Westminster Confession and other historic creeds. Under

the revised constitution, officers of the church vowed to be guided by these confessions, but were no longer required to subscribe to any. The result of the change was that a minister denying the deity of Christ was confirmed by the same denomination that had earlier removed J. Gresham Machen from its ministry for refusing to resign from the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions, an agency erected to send out only confessionally orthodox missionaries.⁸

Do such actions make a denomination apostate, no longer a true church of Jesus Christ? Certainly the official change of creed regarding the authority of Scripture put a knife to the throat of the church, to use Calvin's figure.⁹ Since apostatizing is a process, individuals and congregations must judge as to its degree in relation to counter-measures for reform. Synods or assemblies may reverse decisions at later gatherings. And how do we discern apostasy in a congregation, as over against a denomination? Does denominational apostasy remove legitimacy from a gospel-preaching congregation? Denominational councils may be moving rapidly in a direction that would remove the church from its apostolic foundation, while particular congregations still resist efforts to deny to the Lord of the church the authority of his Word. No doubt the 'frog in the kettle' parable comes to mind. Unless local congregations and individual believers put loyalty to the Word of the Lord above loyalty to a denomination, the great mark of the church has already been denied. The issue is likely to be centred on the refusal of a local congregation to submit to unbiblical directives, or to condone heresy by silence and inaction. Contemporary churches need to hear again what the Spirit says to the churches in the book of Revelation.

We must still keep the marks of the church in view when we consider fellowships that do not call themselves churches. Many of these exist because of the denominational dividedness of the church. Mission agencies functioning in the Third World and on university campuses link members of many denominations. Publishers of Sunday School materials and of Christian books have created their own constituencies as they serve the educational ministry of the church. Indeed, even the preparation of candidates for the ministry of the Word has been undertaken by institutions that are not under denominational

control. Churches worship with hymnals, song books and overhead transparencies from a wide variety of sources. Friction is inevitable, since such activities are also conducted by denominations. To whom, for example, does the overseas missionary look for direction? Is he first responsible to his mission board, to the church or churches that sent him, to the organization of his missionary colleagues, or to the national church on the field?

The church, shattered by denominational division, dare not label parachurch organizations illegitimate. In part, they are simply activities of church members. In an undivided church, there would be 'lay' organizations, under the broad oversight of the government of the church, but not the immediate responsibility of church officers. In part, they represent shared ministries across denominational barriers. That such ministries may be regarded as irregular in denominational polity may reveal more about sectarian assumptions in the polity than about violations of New Testament order.

Dangerous irregularities arise for both denominational churches and parachurch groups when they ignore their limitations. The limitation of the denomination (more serious than supposed) is that it does not give full expression to the body of Christ, and needs, therefore, the wider relations that parachurch groups help to supply. The limitation of the parachurch group is that it lacks some of the marks of the church. It needs denominations because it does not provide the ordered structure of office, worship, sacrament and discipline that a denominational church offers. Because such groups are not churches, they do not dismiss members to churches or receive them from churches, and rightly find no difficulty in recruiting members of denominational churches.

Some parachurch groups are moving toward denominational status. They baptize and celebrate the Lord's Supper, conduct regular worship services and set apart their own staff for ministry. The Christian and Missionary Alliance, for example, is a denominational church that was initially founded in the USA as a parachurch. The difficulty in such a transition is, first, whether a new denomination can be justified, and, second, the fact that the privileges of the church may be claimed even though the biblical requirements for the responsibilities of the

church have not been met. An example would be the kind of celebration of the Lord's Supper that is sometimes conducted during conferences and conventions. Gatherings of thousands of people may be offered the elements without the oversight that Christ has appointed for the church. To be sure, such celebrations are accompanied by the preaching of the Word, and mark for many a sweet foretaste of the final gathering of the people of God. If an adequate warning is given to those who might partake unworthily, some measure of discipline is exercised. Yet the service assumes that the conference organizers, who have no personal knowledge of most of those who attend, may welcome them and others to the table of the Lord apart from the order and shepherding of the church.

Perspectives on the church: visible and invisible

To define the marks of the church, we must assume that the church has a visible form, that it is organized on earth as an observable society. But is the church heavenly or earthly, visible or invisible?

The Bible certainly speaks of the church in heavenly terms. Chosen to holiness in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4-5), it is not to be likened to the kingdoms of this world (Eph. 1:23; 5:23, 32; Col. 1:18; Jn 18:36). It is the dwelling of God, built of living stones on Christ as the chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:5). Only the Lord knows infallibly those who are his, and they are joined to him by the secret working of his Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 2:19; Jn. 3:8).

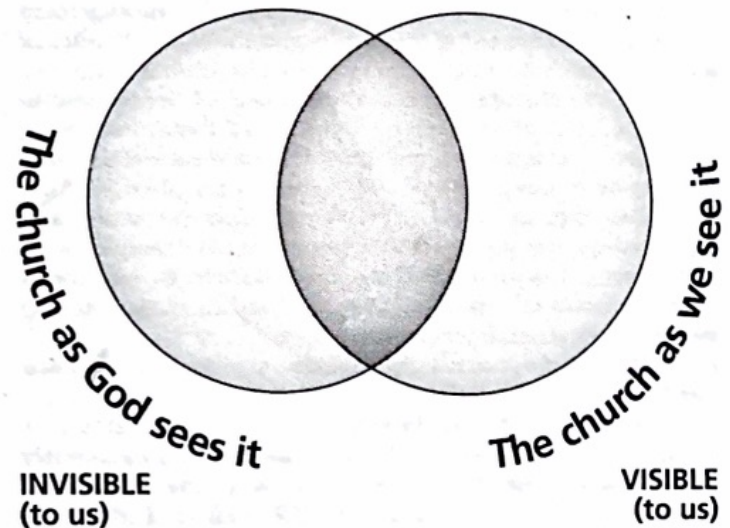
The Reformers disputed the external description given by Roman Catholic apologists. It is *spiritually* that the church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic. Cardinal Bellarmine took no account of New Testament language when he said that the church was just as visible as the republic of Venice.¹⁰ As Hans Küng points out, a church so completely visible would not be an object of faith ('I believe . . . the holy catholic church').

Yet the church is identifiable in the world. It has members and officers; its sacraments are outward signs of its faith and hope. It does, however, include hypocrites: in the New Testament as in the Old there are those of Israel who are not Israel (Rom. 2:28; 9:6). The wicked must be put away (1 Cor.

5:13); in a great house there are vessels of dishonour (2 Tim. 2:20). There are those, writes John, who went out from us because they were not of us (1 Jn. 2:19).

We can deny neither the visible nor the invisible aspects of the church. Limiting the church to its visible aspect erases the reality of God's election. Since the Lord knows his own sheep, given him by the Father, we may say that the church invisible is the church as God sees it. We hear words and observe actions; we can be deceived by hypocrisy, or fail to recognize true faith. God alone knows every heart.

A simple diagram of two overlapping circles may illustrate this. One circle describes the 'invisible' church, *i.e.* all the saints known to God, past, present and future. The other circle describes the 'visible' church, *i.e.* as it appears to us. There is a significant overlap. Many of the Lord's people are well known to others of the Lord's people (though Elijah felt that he alone was left, whereas in fact God had 7,000 others who had not bowed the knee to Baal, 1 Ki. 19:18). In the circle that describes the 'visible' church, however, but not included in the overlap, are all



those professing Christians to whom the Lord will say at last, 'I never knew you.'

The Westminster Confession defines the church as visible and invisible, recognizing the two aspects, but speaking of them as distinct. The invisible church 'consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head thereof' (XXV.I). The visible church 'consists of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion; and of their children' (XXV.II). The sharp differentiation indicates that we can deal only with the church visible. By recognizing that, we will avoid the mistake of demanding dramatic conversion accounts from believers to prove their regeneration. Yet we must also recognize that it is God's knowledge that finally determines church membership. The hypocrite who reveals his fraud can take no refuge in his outward membership, much as its privileges may increase his judgment.

Evangelicals have often excused a deep neglect of the order of the church by emphasizing its invisibility. If only the church invisible matters, there need be little concern about the unity, holiness, catholicity, or even apostolicity of the church. Loss of concern for the church visible has also opened the way for reinventing the church. Assuming that the New Testament has little to say about church form, leaders trained in management have set about organizing it according to the latest theories of social science.

All this has been less disastrous than might be supposed. In spite of neglect of the church, the fruit of the Spirit among Christians has found expression in genuine care for one another. Parachurch groups have often accomplished what the Lord designed the church to do, providing nurture and encouraging evangelism. The Navigators, for example, were first organized to bring fellowship to sailors in the American Navy who were cut off from regular church attendance. The movement developed programmes of Scripture memorization, Bible study and personal discipleship that have since been carried over into many churches. In publishing this book on the doctrine of the church, InterVarsity Press demonstrates a concern for Christ's church that goes well beyond its ministry to Christians on campus. Christians active in the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship (UCCF) in Britain and in the

InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF) in the United States have experienced spiritual culture shock when they have graduated and taken their places in local congregations. They have missed the support and accountability of small groups in prayer and Bible study, the concerted efforts at evangelism, and the joy of singing psalms of praise together. The shock is less today, however, in part because former campus leaders have brought renewal to the churches.

The Bible does not give a detailed blueprint for all church order, but provides principles that find expression in the varied cultures of the globe. In applying those principles, studies of human behaviour are useful. Knowledge of small-group dynamics may help a leader draw out a person who fears to participate, or warn of the dangers of the premium put on consensus.¹¹ Yet the behavioural sciences cannot be the starting-point for the spiritual order of the church, for those sciences will not support the servant-leader's self-sacrifice that derives from the theology of the cross, or the appeal to the authority of the Word of God that marks all church order.

Perspectives on the church: local and universal

Just as the church is both visible and invisible, so is the visible church both local and universal. The invisible aspect of the church determines its earthly form. As the author of Hebrews tells us, in worship we gather with the festival assembly of the saints and the angels where Jesus is in glory (Heb. 12:22-24). Many or few, we gather here because we all gather there.

The church has long disagreed over whether the universal church or the local church is primary. The Roman Catholic Church has strongly advocated the primacy of the church universal.¹² In this view, local parishes are not so much churches as parts of the church proper. In contrast, congregationalism holds that it is the local church that deserves the name; associations of churches are not the church as such.

Both sides appeal to the New Testament. We read of house churches in the greetings at the beginnings of Paul's letters. All the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to Priscilla and Aquila, and Paul greets them, along with the church in their house (Rom. 16:3-5). In 1 Corinthians 16:19, Aquila and Priscilla are

in Ephesus, and the church in their house is sending greetings, along with 'the churches of Asia'. We read of a church in Laodicea in the house of Nympha (Col. 4:15), and in Colosse at the house of Philemon (Phm. 2). Paul mentions the house church in the same breath with the churches of the Gentiles, or of Asia. House churches are found in places where city churches are addressed (Rome, Laodicea, Colosse). Similarly, the 'church in Jerusalem' is spoken of (Acts 8:1), while the phrase 'from house to house' (Acts 5:42) refers to the teaching of the apostles in house-church fellowships.¹³ The account of Peter's mission to the house of Cornelius indicates how a house church might be established among the Gentiles (note Acts 10:24, 27).

Further, the term 'church' may be applied not only to house and city fellowships, where the members could meet together, but also to the church in a province (Acts 9:31; 15:3). At the same time, Paul speaks, as we have just seen, of the churches (plural) among the Gentiles.

Finally, 'church' in the singular is used of the church universal (1 Cor. 10:32; 12:28; 15:9; Gal. 1:13; Eph. 1:22; 3:10, 21; 5:23-32; Col. 1:18, 24).

How can one term be used with such flexibility? Simply because it is not the geographical size or location that defines it. Even those committed to the local-church definition must ask which is the local church in the New Testament. Is it the house church, or is it the city church?

We do better to conclude that the church can be expressed at more than one level: in smaller or in larger fellowships, or even in gatherings like that in Jerusalem (Acts 15), representing the whole church, in order to deal with issues that concern all.

Perspectives on the church: institute or organism?

'Where is the church on Monday?' asks an author who raises the perennial issue of the relation of the organized church to the organic life of the body of Christ.¹⁴ Does the Lord's assembly exist only when it is assembled? Or is it found only where its officers and staff are at work: in the church building, perhaps, where the pastor and staff are reviewing the Sunday services, or in a hospital room where a chaplain is visiting a patient

recovering from surgery? Does the church remain invisible except when members and officers meet in Christ's name?

Clearly the church visible does not vanish when no meeting is in progress, or when the staff attend to no 'official' duties. The church is present wherever its members are. One great gain of the Protestant Reformation was its recognition of the place of the 'laity' in the church. Rejecting the Roman Catholic view of a separate priesthood endowed with sacramental grace, the Reformers taught that all believers have priestly access to the heavenly sanctuary and to every saving grace, needing no other Mediator but Jesus Christ.

Vatican II gave eloquent exposition to the 'apostolate of the laity'.¹⁵ 'Participators in the function of Christ, priest, prophet and king, the laity have an active part of their own in the life and action of the Church.'¹⁶ This description seems to affirm the priesthood of all believers and to declare their prophetic and kingly offices as well. The patronizing tone of the sentence is not accidental, however. The thoughtful and extensive description of the functions of the laity is accompanied by unreduced claims for the 'apostolate of the hierarchy'. Lay people may participate in Christ's offices, but not in the bishop's. Only because the bishop is invested with 'the fullness of the sacrament of Orders' can he offer the eucharistic sacrifice, or ensure that it is offered, and it is from the Eucharist that the church derives its life.¹⁷ The bishops have no authority unless united with the Roman Pontiff, and he, 'by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, namely, and as pastor of the entire church, has full, supreme and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered.'¹⁸ For Vatican II, it remains true that in authority the Pope plus the hierarchy equals the Pope minus the hierarchy.

Partly through reaction to the hierarchical claims of the Roman Catholic Church, some evangelical churches have sought to remove all office from the church. Such a position is justified if 'office' means 'Orders', i.e. investment with sacramental gifts that other church members do not possess. This is not the New Testament teaching. Those who exercise special office in the church are those who possess gifts for teaching, ruling or showing mercy to a greater degree than others. The church needs to acknowledge such gifts. 'Office' in the biblical sense is a function that requires community recognition to be

exercised effectively. Later on, in chapter 14, we will discuss gifts and office, but the distinction between 'officers' and 'members' will help us to understand where the church is on a Monday.

The church is found where the saints are found, and where they are fulfilling their calling from Christ. The bane of clericalism has been the definition of the church, theoretically or practically, in terms of the clergy, or of the 'religious'. Even the term 'vocation' was once co-opted by this approach, as though only priests, monks or nuns were called by the Lord.

The right response to this error is to turn it on its head. Christ himself came not to be ministered to, but to minister and to give his life for many. Those who would be first in the service of Christ must have the same mind. As the Lord wore a towel, so all who would be leaders in the church must understand leadership as service.

The work of church officers, therefore, should not be modelled on the military or on big business. Officers are coaches, who train, assist and encourage the saints who carry out the calling of the church in the world.

That principle rights our present situation in two ways. On the one hand, it puts the calling of believers in its place. They are not at the fringes of the work of the church; they *are* the church, filled with the Spirit, doing its work in the world. As they better understand their kingdom calling, they will know that they are lights and leaven in the world, and that they bear spiritual weapons. Though heavenly citizenship does not bar them from belonging to earthly kingdoms, it commits them to discharge their duties and seize their opportunities as servants of Christ. As they take their calling seriously, they are likely to create more, not fewer, 'parachurch' groups. All Christians, whether homemakers, educators, statesmen, lawyers, doctors, nurses, merchants, artisans, labourers, counsellors or social workers, need to explore together the demands of their work. In every calling, the application of biblical principles can best be worked out by those who are daily confronted with its problems and opportunities.

On the other hand, when biblical humility turns the tables on clericalism, it does not create a new arrogance, a laicism that will tell those with gifts for teaching and for managing, 'We have no need of you!' Rather, as church members begin to take seriously

their individual and corporate calling in the world, they will feel more keenly the need of the instruction and spiritual direction for which Christ has appointed under-shepherds.

The tension that is sometimes felt between the office of all believers and the special offices in the church is not a tension between worldly institutionalism and spirituality. As we have seen, the Spirit is the Author of order as well as ardour. If he brought order out of chaos in the work of creation, he will not reduce order to chaos in the new creation. When the apostle Paul calls for order rather than disorder or frenzy in the worship of the church, he is not quenching the Spirit, but seeking what the Spirit alone can give.