

The Character of the Universal Church

Michael Woody | LBCF 26:1-2

SURVEY OF SCRIPTURE

1. The catholic or universal church, which (with respect to the internal work of the Spirit and truth of grace) may be called invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ, the head thereof (Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 1:22; 4:11-15; 5:23-25, 27, 29, 32; Col. 1:18, 24; Heb. 12:23);
2. and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all. (Eph. 1:22; 4:15; 5:23-25, 27, 29, 32; Col 1:18, 24; Rev. 21:9-14)
3. All persons throughout the world, professing the faith of the gospel and obedience unto God by Christ according unto it, not destroying their own profession by any errors everting *[the act of turning something inside out]* the foundation, or unholiness of conversation, are and may be called visible saints (1 Cor. 1:2; Rom. 1:7-8; Acts 11:26; Matt. 16:18; 28:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-9);
4. and of such ought all particular congregations to be constituted. (Matt. 18:15-20; Acts 2:37-42; 4:4; Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 5:1-9)

THE CHARACTER OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

1. This chapter differs the most from the WCF:
 - a. The WCF has ____ paragraphs
 - b. The LBCF has _____ paragraphs
2. The reason for this disparity is that the doctrine of the church primarily separates the _____ Puritans from the _____ Puritans.
 - a. Differing with the WCF is not restricted to _____.

- b. Many of the paragraphs in this chapter are derived from the _____ Declaration of Faith.
- c. The ideas found in this chapter were advocated by _____ Puritans as Thomas Goodwin, John Owen, John Cotton and Jonathan Edwards.
- d. The idea of placing them in the _____ is unique to the Baptists.

3. Paragraph divisions:

- a. Paragraphs 1-4 are substantially derived from the Savoy revision of the Westminster Confession's paragraphs and they deal with the _____ church.
- b. Paragraphs 5-15 are substantially derived from the platform of _____ church polity published with the Savoy Declaration.
- c. Paragraphs 1-2 are structured around the distinction between the _____ and _____ church.
- d. A website that has a great comparison of the three confessions is:
https://www.proginosko.com/docs/wcf_sdfo_lbcf.html

IT IS INVISIBLE (P.1)

1. Comparison of the Confessions

- a. The Savoy is very _____ to the WCF
- b. The LBCF differs in its _____ of what universal means

2. Key words in this paragraph:

- a. The term ' _____ ' means universal.
- b. The term ' _____ ' is qualified by the Confession: 'which may be called invisible'.
- c. The term ' _____ ' is the third key word (f the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one).

3. This paragraph, by means of these key words, teaches at least three things.

- a. There is a _____ church.

- b. This universal church consists of _____ the _____.
- c. This universal church is _____.
4. Does the Bible distinguish between _____ and _____ church?
- a. The New Testament uses the word 'church' _____ times.
- i. Most of those occurrences do not refer to the universal church, but to a _____ church or _____ (2 Cor. 8:23-24; Gal. 1:2).
- ii. The New Testament does speak of a _____ church (Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 1:22; 4:11-15; 5:23-25, 27, 29, 32; Col. 1:18, 24; Heb. 12:23).
- b. There are perversions of either extremes:
- i. Landmark Baptists deny the _____ church.
- ii. Our church has had our own experience with a man who denied the _____ church
- iii. Either extreme is a denial of _____
- c. Why distinguish between the church as an _____ and the church as the _____ of God?
- i. Such a distinction enables us to do justice to portions of the New Testament which are frequently _____.
- ii. There is a sense in which the church began as an _____ and _____ in the complex of events surrounding Christ's first advent.
- iii. There was a sense in which historically the church began in the events of Christ's earthly ministry, death, resurrection and _____ out of the Spirit.
- iv. The Apostles are the historical _____ upon which Christ is now building his church (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:20; Heb 12:18-24).
- v. The future tense in the statement of Christ, 'I will build my church', may be given its _____ _____ as a future event versus an already existing phenomena.

- vi. Israel was a _____ of the church but Israel was not the church, which is a New Covenant _____.
- vii. The church will one day be composed of _____ the _____ (the church does consist 'of the whole number of the elect'); this refutes _____ with its church/Israel distinction and its denial that the Old Testament saints are part of the church.

d. In what sense is the church 'invisible' (Waldron)?

- i. It is invisible because we cannot directly see the _____ of the _____ which joins a person to Christ.
- ii. It is invisible because we cannot _____ the truth of another person's grace.
- iii. It is invisible because the church as a whole is not yet a _____ reality.
- iv. Visible churches are only imperfect and partial manifestations of the _____ church, but they are just as important.
- v. It is in invisible church _____ are a part; it is in the local church that the _____ of the _____ are used.

IT IS VISIBLE (P.2)

1. Comparison of the confessions

WCF: 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, together with 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.

SDOF: The whole body of men throughout the world, professing the faith of the gospel and obedience unto God by Christ according to it, not destroying their own profession by any errors everting the foundation, or unholiness of conversation, are, and may be called the visible catholic church of Christ; although as such it is not entrusted with the

administration of any ordinances, or have any officers to rule or govern in, or over the whole body.

LBCF: All persons throughout the world, professing the faith of the gospel, and obedience unto God by Christ according unto it, not destroying their own profession by any errors everting the foundation, or unholiness of conversation, are and may be called visible saints; and of such ought all particular congregations to be constituted.

2. The three confessions differ from one another but the _____ and _____ are the most similar.
3. What does this teach us?
 - a. The identity of the visible church is described as those only _____ to believe the gospel and obey Christ and who do not contradict this profession by holding foundational errors or practising ungodliness (1 Cor. 1:2; Rom. 1:7-8; Acts 11:26; Matt. 16:18; 28:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-9).
 - b. The relation of the universal, visible church to local churches is that only _____ should be members of local churches (Matt. 18:15-20; Acts 2:37-42; 4:4; 1 Cor. 5:1-9).
 - c. While the universal church is not perfectly or completely visible, it is _____.
 - d. There is no true Christian who does not _____ Christ's name and _____ Him outwardly.