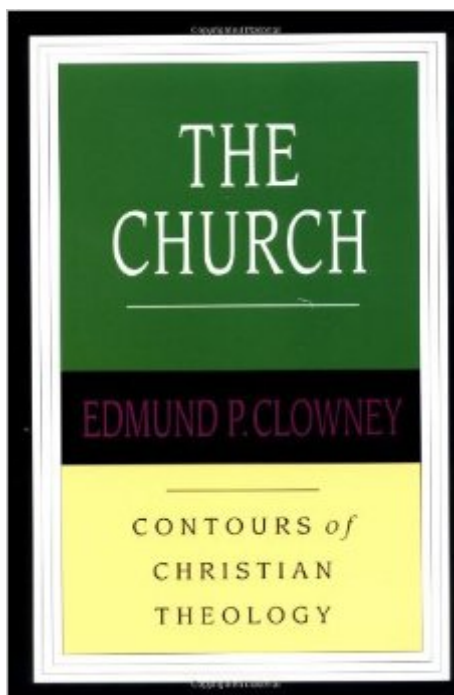


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# The Church (Contours Of Christian Theology)



## Synopsis

At a time in which the very word church sounds a tone of dull irrelevance, the doctrine of the church has suffered the studied neglect of many Christian leaders. The persistent demands to market, manage and grow the church and to meet the felt needs of church and unchurched all threaten to quench theological reflection on the abiding nature and mission of the church. But few activities bear greater promise as a starting point for renewing and reshaping the Christian church than the work of theology. In this book Edmund Clowney takes up that task, addressing along the way a variety of contemporary concerns: worship, mission, church and culture, church and state, church order and discipline, the ministry of women, baptism and the Lord's Supper, tongues and prophecy, signs and wonders. He draws on decades of thinking and teaching about the church as well as from his committed leadership and ministry within the church. Biblical, historical, systematic and Reformed, *The Church* is a timely and provocative reflection on the life, order and purpose of the household of God.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Clowney's book *The Church* is a work of theological art. In it, Clowney paints deep and "artistic" images of the church using her historical beliefs and many Biblical texts. Recently a very good friend of mine left the Protestant church and joined the Roman Catholic church. In my discussions with him over the years he mulled over his decision, the beauty of the Church seemed to take precedence in

his mind. In his final decision, the Roman Catholic church best represented the beauty and doctrine found in the Bible. Before he converted, he mentioned some discussions he had in a class with a well known Protestant church leader. He requested the Protestant definition of the church. In the end, he was not satisfied with the answer. I wish he had read this book before he switched as I think he would have seen a representation of the church that was both true and beautiful. One of the things my friend did not do will with, in my estimation, is dealing with the polemics between Protestants and Catholics. He did not like polemical arguments, tended to avoid them, and when he did engage them, he found that popular Protestant arguments did not accurately represent true Roman Catholic doctrine. As a result, he would often defend the Roman Catholic perspective. One reason I like this book is that Clowney deals with a number of controversial topics without (for the most part) using polemical arguments. It makes for an attractive and positive presentation of the Protestant doctrine of the church. He deals with issues such as whether Peter is "the rock", whether women should be deacons, and other "hot topics", with clarity, conviction, and charity. Clowney bears his sword and deals with error, but does not malign his opponents before doing battle.

In the past decade, it seems that I have been a part of churches that hit most of the stereotypes within Baptist circles. I worked as a youth intern in a fairly standard contemporary church. Went from that to being the college intern for a year in a church that probably looked about the same as it did in 1950. After that I headed up the college group for a couple of years at a place that did the whole seeker-sensitive/attractional thing, and now my wife and I have landed at an Acts29 plant. From that range of experience, I can tell you that there is a broad spectrum of ideas on what the church should look like. To be honest, for a long period of time I didn't know if there was an answer to that question. This confusion is one of the reasons that at reading Edmund Clowney's *The Church* was a great experience for me. This book will by no means address every question one may have about how a church should be set up, but it was never meant to. Instead, it broadly looks at what the Bible says as regarding the church to create a sound case for what should be true of every church, regardless of the specifics of polity, music style, or other specific issues. Instead, Clowney paints with broad strokes, looking at how the church is created through the work of God before looking at the traditional attributes (one, holy, apostolic, and catholic/universal) and marks (preaching of the gospel and proper administration of the sacraments) of the church. Following this he turns to more practical issues, considering the church's relation to the world and some specific topics such as the sacraments and women in ministry.

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