

"THE WORDS OF THE LORD ARE PURE WORDS, LIKE SILVER TRIED IN
A FURNACE OF EARTH, PURIFIED SEVEN TIMES.
YOU SHALL KEEP THEM, O LORD, YOU SHALL PRESERVE THEM FROM
THIS GENERATION FOREVER." (PSALM 12: 6 & 7)

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“The Church”

Dear reader, in a moment I am going to mention a word to you, and when I do, I would like for you to think about what your first thought is as it relates to the word that I mention. The moment you hear someone say to you – church—what is your first thought? When I was asked that question a number of years ago, I was immediately impressed with the name of the church that Judy and I were attending at that time. In other words, the term “church” and the name of the institutional church that we were attending were synonymous -- one and the same. Little did I know that “The Church” – “the EKKLESIA” or “called-out-ones” of Father’s word, and the institutional church were anything but synonymous. One is wholly of God – the other is wholly of man. One is eternal in nature – the other is temporal. One is led by the King of Kings and Lord of Lords – the other is led by man. One you must be born into – the other you can join. One represents spiritual Life – the other represents spiritual death.

If you have never taken the time to prayerfully search out the true definition of the “EKKLESIA” or “called-out-ones”, I would urge you to do so. There are a series of writings that you will find factual, informative and life changing. Those writings are titled: **Rethinking the Wineskin, Who is Your Covering and Pagan Christianity**. The author is Frank Viola and I believe you can order the books from the following website: www.ptmin.org There are many other writings on this subject but Viola’s are well documented and easily read and understood. I believe brother Viola is a teacher by profession and it shows in his writings.

Some time ago I read a definition of “The True Church” by Bishop Ryle. I am reproducing it here exactly as it was presented to me (except for correcting typos). Take the time to read it prayerfully and ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten your understanding and lead you into the truth.

The True Church

By Bishop Ryle

Do you belong to the one true Church; to the Church outside of which there is no salvation? I do not ask where you go on Sunday; I only ask, “Do you belong to the one true Church?” Where is this one true Church? What is this one true Church like? What are the marks by which this one true Church may be

known? You may well ask such questions. Give me your attention, and I will provide you with some answers.

The one true Church is composed of all believers in the Lord Jesus. It is made up of all God's elect-of all converted men and women of all true Christians. In whomsoever we can discern the election of God the Father, the sprinkling of the blood of God the Son, the sanctifying work of God the Spirit, in that person we see a member of Christ's true Church.

It is a Church of which all the members have the same marks. They are all born of the Spirit; they all possess "repentance towards God, faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ," and holiness of life and conversation. They all hate sin, and they all love Christ. They worship differently and after various fashions, some worship with a form of prayer, and some with none; some worship kneeling, and some standing; but they all worship with one heart. They are all led by one Spirit; they all build upon one foundation; they all draw their religion from one single Book-that is the Bible. They are all joined to one great center-that is Jesus Christ. They all even now can say with one heart, "Hallelujah", and they can all respond with one heart and voice, "Amen and Amen." It is a Church which is dependent upon no ministers upon earth, however much it values those who preach the Gospel to its members. The life of its members does not hang upon church membership, and baptism, and the Lord's supper-although they highly value these things, when they are to be had. But it has only one great Head, one Shepherd, one chief Bishop-and that is Jesus Christ. He alone, by His Spirit, admits the members of this Church, though ministers may show the door. Till He opens the door no man on earth can open it-neither bishops, nor presbyters, nor convocations, nor synods. Once let a man repent and believe the Gospel, and that moment he becomes a member of this Church. Like the penitent thief, he may have no opportunity of being baptized; but he has that which is far better than any water-baptism-the baptism of the Spirit. He may not be able to receive the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper; but he eats Christ's body and drinks Christ's blood by faith every day he lives, and no minister on earth can prevent him. He may be excommunicated by ordained men, and cut off from the outward ordinances of the professing Church; but all the ordained men in the world cannot shut him out of the true Church.

It is a Church whose existence does not depend on forms, ceremonies, cathedrals, churches, chapels, pulpits, fonts, vestments, organs, endowments, money, kings, governments, magistrates, or any act of favor whatsoever from the hand of man. It has often lived on and continued when all these things have been taken from it; it has often been driven into the wilderness or into dens and caves of the earth, by those who ought to have been its friends. Its existence depends on nothing but the presence of Christ and His Spirit; and they being ever with it, the Church cannot die. This is the Church to which the Scriptural, titles of present honor and privilege, and the promises of future glory, especially belong; this is the body of Christ; this is the flock of Christ; this is the household of faith and the family of God; this is god's building, God's foundation, and the temple of the Holy Spirit. This is the Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven; this is the royal priesthood, the chosen generation, the peculiar people, the purchased possession, the habitation of God, the light of the world; the salt and the wheat of the earth; this is the "Holy Catholic (Universal) Church" of the Apostle's Creed; this is the "One Universal and Apostolic Church" of the Nicene Creed; this is that Church to which the Lord Jesus promises, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt 16:18), and to which He says, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt 16: 18; 28:20).

This is the only Church which possesses true unity. Its members are entirely agreed on all the weightier matters of religion, for they are all taught by one Spirit. About God, and Christ, and the Spirit, and sin,

and their own hearts, and faith, and repentance, and necessity of holiness, and the value of the Bible, and the importance of prayer, and the resurrection, and judgment to come--about all these points they are of one mind. Take three or four of them, strangers to one another, from the remotest corners of the earth; examine them separately on these points; you will find them all of one judgment.

This is the only Church which possesses true sanctity. Its members are all holy. They are not merely holy by profession, holy in name, and holy in the judgment of charity; they are all holy in act, and deed, and reality, and life, and truth. They are all more or less conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. No unholy man belongs to this Church.

This is the only Church which is truly Universal. It is not the Church of any one nation or people; its members are to be found in every part of the world where the Gospel is received and believed. It is not confined within the limits of any one country, or pent-up within the pale of any particular forms or outward government. In it there is no difference between Jew and Greek, black man and white, Episcopalian and Presbyterian--but faith in Christ is all. Its members will be gathered from north, and south, and east, and west, in the last day, and will be of every name and tongue--but all one in Jesus Christ.

This is the only Church which is truly apostolic. It is built on the foundation laid by the Apostles, and holds the doctrines which they preached. The two grand objects at which its members aim are apostolic faith and apostolic practice; and they consider the man who talks of following the Apostles without possessing these two things to be no better than sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

This is the only Church which is certain to endure unto the end. Nothing can altogether overthrow and destroy it. Its members may be persecuted, oppressed, imprisoned, beaten, beheaded, burned; but the true Church is never altogether extinguished; it rises again from its afflictions; it lives on through fire and water. The Pharaohs, the Herods, the Neros, the bloody Marys, have labored in vain to put down this Church; they slay their thousands, and then pass away and go to their own place. The true Church outlives them all and sees them buried each in his turn. It is an anvil that has broken many a hammer in this world, and will break many a hammer still; it is a bush which, often burning, yet is not consumed.

This is the Church which does the work of Christ upon earth. Its members are a little flock, and few in number, compared with the children of the world; one or two here, and two or three there. But these are they who shake the universe; these are they who change the fortunes of kingdoms by their prayers; these are they who are the active workers for spreading the knowledge of pure religion and undefiled; these are the life-blood of a country, the shield, the defense, the stay and the support of any nation to which they belong.

This is the Church which shall be truly glorious at the end. When all earthly glory is passed away then shall this Church be presented without spot before God the Father's throne? Thrones, principalities, and powers upon earth shall come to nothing; but the Church of the first-born shall shine as the stars at the last, and be presented with joy before the Father's throne, in the day of Christ's appearing. When the Lord's jewels are made up, and the manifestation of the sons of God takes place, one Church only will be named, and that is the Church of the elect. Reader, this is the true Church to which a man must belong, if he would be saved. Till you belong to this, you are nothing better than a lost soul. You may have countless outward privileges, you may enjoy great light, and knowledge--but if you do not belong to the body of Christ, your light, and knowledge, and privileges, will not save your soul. Men fancy if they join this church or that church, and become communicants, and go through certain forms, that all must be right

with their souls. All were not Israel who were called Israel, and all are not members of Christ's body who profess themselves Christians. Take notice, you may be a staunch Episcopalian, or Presbyterian, or Independent, or Baptist, or Wesleyan, or Plymouth Brother-and yet not belong to the true Church. And if you do not, it will be better at last if you had never been born.

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I feel like I could write a book on this subject, but nothing that I could say would present the True Church any better than brother Ryle. I only have one thought in conclusion. I have heard many Christians legitimize the institutional church by pointing to the fruit that is produced there. I certainly understand this position, as I have been personally blessed by Father through the institutional church. However, I now realize that our God will use many things to reach those that He has personally called. But that does not necessarily mean that He puts His stamp of approval on the tool or medium that He uses to accomplish His heart's desire. Think about it; in Numbers 22:22-38 we read where God used a jackass to speak to the prophet Balaam. Literally, the jackass spoke to Balaam audibly. If our God will use a jackass to accomplish His purposes, we ought not to think it strange that He would use an institution, or anything else to do the same.

God Bless,

Your Brother, Tom

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"EVERY WORD OF GOD IS PURE; HE IS A SHIELD TO THOSE WHO PUT THEIR TRUST IN HIM. DO NOT ADD TO HIS WORDS, LEST HE REBUKE YOU, AND YOU BE FOUND A LIAR." (PROVERBS 30:5 & 6)