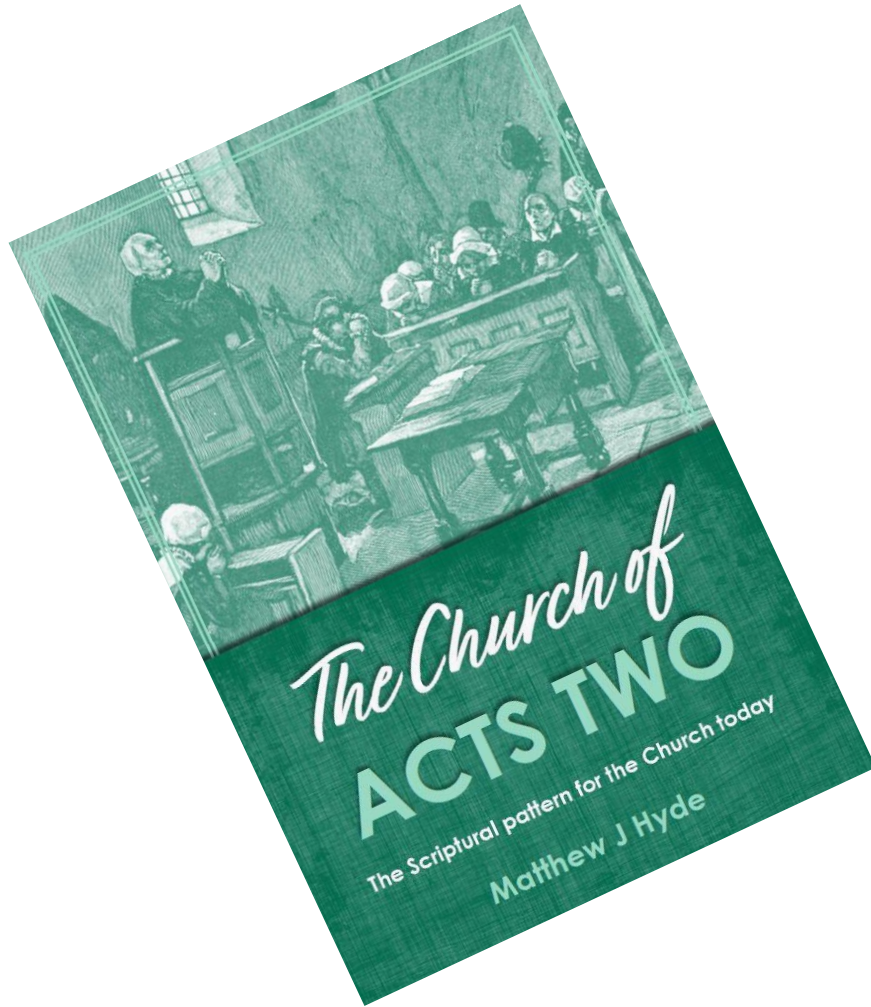


Christ's church: What it means to be a member of the church?

Matthew J Hyde

What today's talk is not going to be!



The Church or a church?

The church

- All of the elect
- Only regenerate people
- All time, all places
- Christ is the head
- “Invisible” church

A church

- A group of baptised people meeting together for worship
- Some may not be regenerate
- Now, in one place
- Christ is the head, but his appointed officebearers lead
- “Visible” church

What it means to be a member of *the* church

Q 1. What is thy only comfort in life and death?

A 1. That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ; who, with his precious blood, hath fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation, and therefore, by his Holy Spirit, he also assures me of eternal life, and makes me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto him.

(Heidelberg Catechism, 1563)

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What it means to be a member of *the* church

- **Relationship** (e.g. Romans 8:16-17; Ephesians 2:12-13)

- Head – body
- Vine – branches
- King – subjects/kingdom
- Husband – wife
- Shepherd – sheep
- Elder brother – coheir
- Foundation – building
- Food/drink – strength communicated

Closeness
Oneness
Dependence
Communication
Direction
Identity

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What it means to be a member of *the* church

- **Blessings** (e.g. Ephesians 1:3-6; Romans 8:28-30)
 - Redeemed (satisfied)
 - Delivered
 - Preserves/keeps
 - Works all for our good
 - Assurance
 - Works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure (daily grace, wisdom, strength, leading of the Spirit etc)

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What it means to be a member of *the* church

- **Duties** (e.g. Colossians 3)

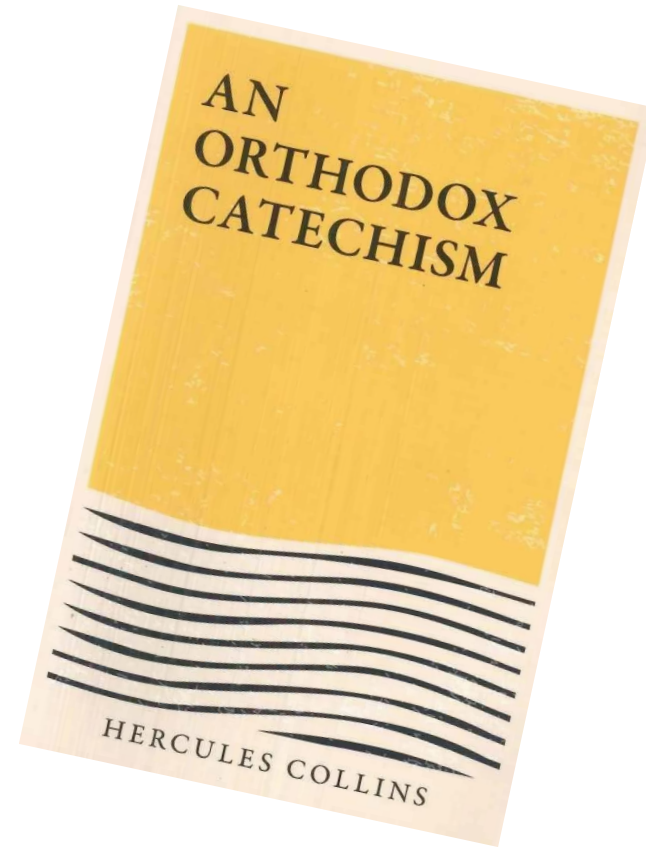
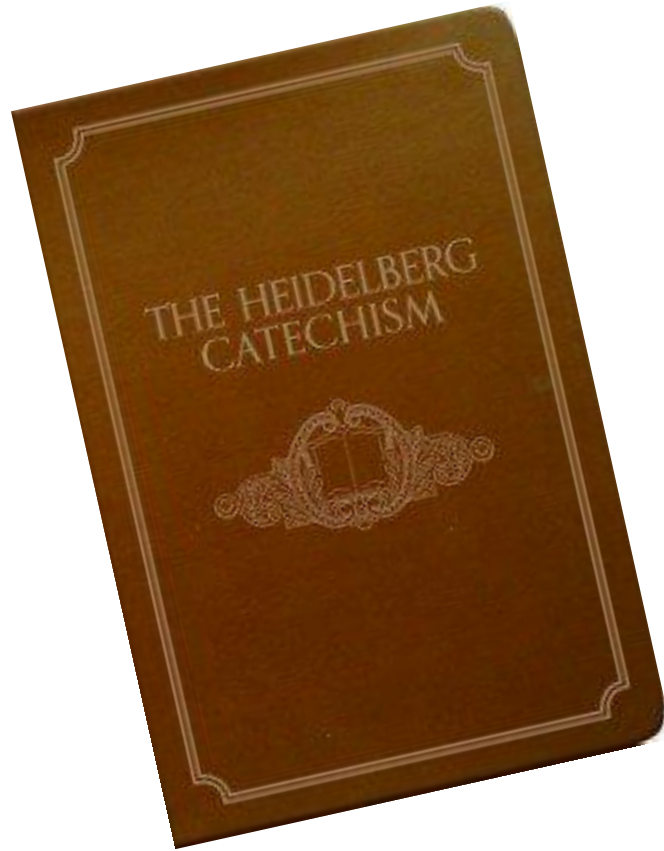
- Walk worthy of the relationship
- Motivated by the blessing
- Keep the gospel precept
- Especially the new commandment – ye love one another

What it means to be a member of *the* church

- Relationship
- Blessings
- Duties

N.b. to be outside of the church is to have *nothing!*

Books to look out for on the bookstall



How do we become members of *the* church?

- Not by baptism
- Not by works – by grace

He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood (not by birth), nor of the will of the flesh (not by merit/works), nor of the will of man (not by the election/choice of the church members, desire of parents etc), **but of God.**

(John 1:11-13)

- Sovereign, full, free

How do we know if we are members of *the* church?

- **Relationship** – love to the Lord Jesus, God, and all that is his; at least a mourning over our lack of love
- **Blessings** – new heart, mind, will; calling – separation; repentance and faith; access at the throne of grace; assurance in some measure
- **Duties** – willingness to keep the gospel precepts; at least a desire to and mourning over/confession of our failure to

What it means to be a member of *a* church

Foundations

1. First, must be a member of *the* church
2. Entry into *a* church is by baptism on profession of faith
3. Right profession of faith is by both words and actions (self-examination)
4. Begins with love – to the head of the church, to the church members
5. Love submits – to Jesus, to the church, to its rules
6. The action is to be informed – what the church believes and what it expects of its members (rules and covenant)
7. To be with commitment – till providence or death us do part

What it means to be a member of a church

Now all and each of these doctrines and ordinances we can honestly say it is our desire to maintain and defend in one spirit and with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel.

And we desire, by the grace of God, that our conversation, both in the world and in the church, may be such as becometh the gospel of Christ, and that we may live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world.

And, as it regards each other in church communion, we desire to walk with each other in all humility and brotherly love; to watch over each other's conversation, to stir up one another to love and good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, but, as we have opportunity, to worship God according to His revealed will; and, when the case requires, to warn and admonish one another according to God's Word.

Moreover, we desire to sympathise with each other in all conditions, both inward and outward, into which God, in His providence, may bring us; as also to bear with one another's weaknesses, failings, and infirmities; and particularly to pray for one another, and for all saints, and that the gospel and the ordinances thereof may be blessed to the edification and comfort of each other's souls, and for the gathering in of vessels of mercy unto Christ.

And for every blessing and favour, both temporal and spiritual, we, who are as deserving of hell as the vilest of the vile, desire to ascribe all the praise to the glory of the grace of a Triune God.

I. Maintain unity in the truth

Now all and each of these **doctrines and ordinances** (*same Faith and Order*) we can honestly say it is our desire to maintain and defend in one spirit and with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel.

“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

(Ephesians 4:3)

2. Give faithful witness in our lives

And we desire, by the grace of God, that **our conversation**, both **in the world and in the church**, may be such as becometh the gospel of Christ, and that we may **live soberly, righteously, and godly** in the present world.

“That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.” (1 Thessalonians 2:12)

3. Seek to edify the body

And, as it regards each other in church communion, we desire to walk with each other in **all humility and brotherly love**; to **watch over** each other's conversation, to **stir up** one another to love and good works; not forsaking the **assembling of ourselves together**, but, as we have opportunity, to worship God according to His revealed will; and, when the case requires, to **warn and admonish** one another according to God's Word.

“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.” (1 Corinthians 10:23)

4. Walk in love

Moreover, we desire to **sympathise** with each other in all conditions, both inward and outward, into which God, in His providence, may bring us; as also to **bear with** one another's weaknesses, failings, and infirmities; and particularly to **pray** for one another, and for all saints, and that the gospel and the ordinances thereof may be blessed to the edification and comfort of each other's souls, and for the gathering in of vessels of mercy unto Christ.

“And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us” (Ephesians 5:2)

5. Seek growth in the church

... particularly to **pray** for ... **the gathering in of vessels of mercy unto Christ.**

“Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”

(Matthew 6:10)

6. Praise and worship

And for every blessing and favour, both temporal and spiritual, we, who are as deserving of hell as the vilest of the vile, desire **to ascribe all the praise to the glory of the grace of a Triune God.**

“And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people.”

“And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is.” (Acts 2:46-47 & 4:24)

What it means to be a member of *a* church

1. Maintain unity in the truth (commitment)
2. Give faithful witness in our lives
3. Seek to edify the body
4. Walk in love
5. Seek growth in the church
6. Praise and worship

These are as important as the Articles of Faith and the Church Rules

Right role of Church Rules

1. Witness of the church is in its orderliness. God is a God of order
2. Witness of the church is in its unity (John 17)
3. Both order and unity are assisted by right and proper rules
4. Word of God first and ultimate
5. Under the word, a right place for rules
6. Churches are self-governing
7. Know the rules!

An attractive church

The church is right when people want to join it

My heart will pray for Zion still,
While life and breath remains;
There my best friends, my kindred dwell,
There God my Saviour reigns.

Because then are we most mirroring the image of our Saviour, the great
Head of the Church

What it means to be a member of *the* church

1. Highest privilege
2. Greatest grace
3. Weighty responsibility

But Jesus gives grace sufficient, and he says:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Recommended reading

