

The Church

A correct church is not necessarily a living church ... a formally correct church is not necessarily a faithful church.

Rousas J. Rushdoony, *Systematic Theology*, 2:669, 675

A church that is merely comfortable, that never evangelizes, never encourages its people to stand on the front line, will never be strong, never be grateful, never be able to sort out profoundly Christian priorities.

D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*, p. 78

The present welfare state is in part due to the dereliction of Christians who have withdrawn the faith into the inner life of man. ... the modern state has created an unprecedented form of power by taking over the church's diaconal services.

Rousas J. Rushdoony, *In His Service: The Christian Calling to Charity*, pp. 4-5

William Booth accused the churches of mummifying their converts, of producing mummy Christians who sat in the pew and whose action was little more than a meager reaching for one's wallet We dare not reduce the faith to pious gush, nor worship to an aesthetic experience. The purpose of the church's services is not an impressive musical or liturgical treat but to provide marching orders to the soldiers of Christ.

Rousas J. Rushdoony, *In His Service: The Christian Calling to Charity*, pp. 5-6

... This summer, the world suffers from recession. The roots of it are deep. To learn more about them, read Thomas Sowell's *The Housing Boom and Bust*. It's the only book you need to read to understand where we got where we are. George W. Bush did not help matters. Barak Obama is making them worse. When you break God's moral law (whether it's unscrupulous lenders, avaricious borrowers, unethical bankers, stupid investors, or power-mad politicians), you eventually pay the price—in this case, quite literally.

... What morally wobbly days we live in! By and large, the church has given up its prophetic role in the culture—it's obsessed with the sandbox struggles of escapist evangelism, therapeutic psychology, emergent and missional claptrap, leftwing politics, and seeker-sensitive humanism. Thank God for the exceptions to this apostasy, but the exceptions (sadly) prove the rule.

P. Andrew Sandlin, President, Center for Cultural Leadership (Newsletter, August 2009)

Too many churchmen have assumed that, because the state has a welfare program, they are absolved from the need to do anything in this sphere. It is strange that the early church, living within the Roman Empire, with its very comprehensive welfare system, which included housing and entertainment, "bread and circuses," did not say that the Biblical mandate for charity could be disregarded! Instead, they began, although they were few in number, a major movement, headed by deacons, to meet human needs, beginning in their own circles. They obviously did not see, as against our modern churchmen, statist welfare as pleasing to God.

Rousas J. Rushdoony, *In His Service: The Christian Calling to Charity*, p. 190

The power of the early church was in its remarkable ministry of service to the needy, to widows and orphans, to the sick, the homeless, and to travelers. Captives were ransomed, discarded newly-born babies picked up and reared, and much, much more. It was the power of obedience.

Rousas J. Rushdoony, *In His Service: The Christian Calling to Charity*, p. 38

Christianity no longer commands all things because it has been limited to a faith for the church rather than a faith for the world and for every sphere of life and thought. It has ceased to be universal or catholic, and catholicity does not mean control but a universality of total and efficacious relevance. A

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limited Christ is simply no Christ at all.

Rousas J. Rushdoony, *In His Service: The Christian Calling to Charity*, p. 151

The church has confused worship with Christianity. The church is a barren place if it be no more than a worship center. It must be the training center, the barracks building of God's army, where Christ's people are prepared to exercise dominion in those spheres of life which surround them.

Rousas J. Rushdoony, *In His Service: The Christian Calling to Charity*, p. 161

Jesus to the pious legalists of His day, "For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers" (Matthew 23:4). Those who know the Word of God can use it, not to liberate a people, but to oppress. We may be able to point out with great exegetical accuracy the wicked things men are doing because we know the Bible, the divine law. But, if we do it to humiliate people, to bring them down as we exalt our superior knowledge, then we have shut the door to God's grace. To proclaim the word of God to a people is to be willing to identify with those people, i.e., to move our fingers toward them, to enable them to receive God's grace to fulfill it. We must never simply drop the Word of God on a people like a bomb; we must be willing to stand alongside a people, to walk with them, as we help them live it out. This is the characteristic mark of pastoral ministry pleasing to God.

James Nickel

... the church has fallen prey to this spirit of the times. If we really had our druthers we wouldn't want worship to be too terribly demanding. We wouldn't want doctrine that challenges our pet notions. We really only want music that we're comfortable with. We only want preaching that reassures us, that reinforces our peculiar preferences, that affords us a sense of serenity - and all in record time. We want quick change; cheap grace; inspirational platitudes; bumper sticker theology; easy faith. We want Christianity Lite. We want the Nice News, not necessarily the Good News.

George Grant, *Shelf Life*, p. 36

... to be married to the spirit of the age is to make one a widow in the next ... [this marriage] is retrogressive and static because its alliance with a particular historically conditioned fad tethers it to a way of thinking that cannot survive a particular historical age.

P. Andrew Sandlin, *Totalism: God's Sovereign Claims in All of Life*, p. 31

The methodology of modern church growth pundits is driven by the belief that theology and dogma must in some way conform to the temper of the times. The methodology of Biblical church growth, in contrast, is driven by the belief that theology and dogma transform the temper of the times.

James Nickel

The view of Rome is that the church gave the Scriptures, and the church controls the interpretation ... The Protestant view is that the Bible authenticates the church, not vice versa. The church therefore is the product of the revealed word and is the guardian of it only as the agency for its proclamation. The church is indeed the witness to the revelation, the Bible, but as one who receives it, not as one who determines it.

Rousas J. Rushdoony, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, p. 338

Is the church prior, or the individual, or the Holy Spirit? If Rome has erred in giving priority to the church, Protestantism has erred in giving it to the individual. He who informs both is the Holy Spirit ... the church has been unwilling to face the implications of this fact, and its reluctance is in part understandable. Not every church has been as plain-spoken in its stand as Rome, but, in some fashion, every church wants to control the people and somehow insure a "sound" channel for the operations of the Spirit. We can add that the rigidity and oppressiveness of control in some Protestant churches often

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puts Rome to shame: the word and the Spirit are subordinated to church policies and rules. Having said this, another fact must be cited. In every church tradition, revolt has been endemic. Because every church has in some form a doctrine of the Spirit, all have a potential of “outbreaks.” Even those heretical groups which deny the personality of the Spirit have not been immune. We can thus say that the charismatic movement, whatever our opinion of it, has been and is *an inevitable fact*. Given the living Spirit and the word, it is inescapable that “eruptions” will take place. The church has been like a volcanic mountain trying to suppress a totally active volcano: all the life in it comes from the volcano, which the mountain seeks to contain. The greater the suppression, the greater will be the explosive eruption. We cannot deny the authority of the church, of teachers, pastors, and all like powers. They are God ordained. However, we cannot limit God’s voice and the workings of His Spirit to such authorities. God Himself, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is the source of all authority. The word is God’s authoritative revelation, and the Spirit does not contradict that word: it confirms and authenticates that word for us ... Such a perspective fills churchmen with a sense of dread, and a fear of anarchy. Church control seems preferable to the Holy Spirit.

Rousas J. Rushdoony, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, pp. 340-342

The great error of our day is to equate the church with the kingdom of God. This creates churchianity, not biblical Christianity. We are commanded to seek first God’s kingdom, not church functions. The church is a very important aspect of the kingdom of God, but we live and move and have our being in God, not in the so-called “activities” of the church (some of which are highly questionable). The function of the church is to be a place of corporate worship, corporate prayer, and corporate training in the tools of dominion in terms of Christ’s great commission (Matthew 28:18-20). The function of the church is to train, commission, and thrust out worshipping men and women who evangelize and disciple nations by taking dominion over all the earth in terms of their distinctive callings under God.

James Nickel

God has designed His Church to be the expression of the reign of Jesus on this earth; in a sense, the church is God’s government on earth undergirding visible governments. It can make possible a climate of benevolent law and order, the rule of justice and peace, and can hold in restraint the wild forces of tyranny, anarchy, and murder ... When the Church is faithful to her calling she becomes a healing agency in society, able to lift a whole nation or an empire to a higher plateau of wholesome living ... This is what it means to reign with Christ now.

Ray C. Stedman, *Body Life*

The first aim of the Church is to live to the praise and glory of God ... to declare in word, and demonstrate in attitude and deed the character of Jesus Christ who dwells within His people in a dynamic and effectual union ... to declare the reality of a life changing encounter with a living Christ ... to demonstrate that change by an unselfish, love-filled life.

Ray C. Stedman, *Body Life*

While that great body [the Roman Empire] was invaded by open violence or undermined by slow decay, a pure and humble religion gently insinuated itself into the minds of men, grew up in silence and obscurity, derived new vigor from opposition, and finally erected the triumphant banner of the Cross on the ruins of the Capitol.

Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. I (New York: The Modern Library), p. 382

Most ... tend to worship their work, work at their play, and play at their worship.

A. W. Tozer, *Worship: The Missing Jewel in the Evangelical Church*

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God is spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth. Only the Holy Spirit can enable a fallen man to worship God acceptably. As far as that's concerned, only the Holy Spirit can pray acceptably; only the Holy Spirit can do anything acceptably.

A. W. Tozer, *Worship: The Missing Jewel in the Evangelical Church*

The work done by a worshipper will have eternity in it.

A. W. Tozer, *Worship: The Missing Jewel in the Evangelical Church*

The paradox of faith is that the church on fire is the church at rest.

Sherwood Elliot Wirt

Though it may sometimes be winter with the church, when those blessings seem to wither and do not appear, yet the root of them is fixed, a spring-time will come, when through the reviving beams of the approaching Sun of righteousness they shall flourish again.

Matthew Henry (commentary on Isaiah 61:1)

The church in the Western world has been taken captive by the world it helped create.

Os Guinness

Sleepwalking Christians are the heart of the crisis in Western Civilization today.

Gary North

At least five times, the Faith has to all appearances gone to the dogs. In each of these five cases, it was the dog that died.

G. K. Chesterton

The key question for every local church is not, "What is God's plan for this church?" but, "What is God's plan for the world and how is this church going to fit into that plan?"

James Nickel