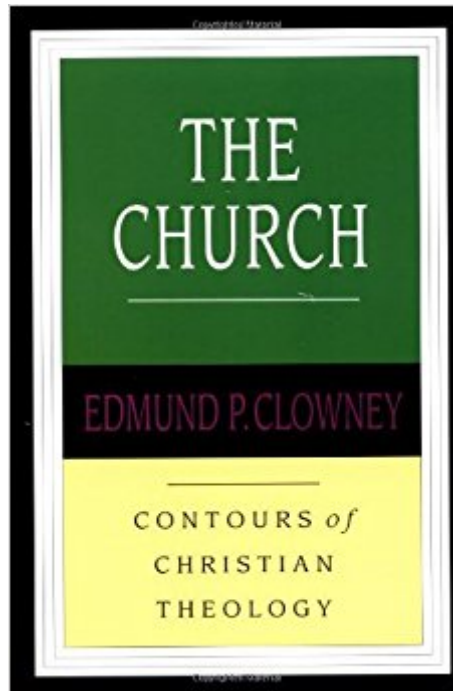




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# The Church (Contours Of Christian Theology)



## 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

"This series has been around for over a decade now and has established itself as providing learned yet accessible treatments of key topics in systematic theology. The authors are not only fine theological thinkers, they are also passionate churchmen with a love for God's people and a desire to see the church grow in her knowledge of grace. Each volume blends exegesis, theological

synthesis and judicious dialogue with the history of theology to provide an excellent treatment of the chosen topic. Highly recommended for thoughtful Christians who want to deepen their knowledge of Christian theology." (Carl R. Trueman, Paul Woolley Professor of Church History, Westminster Theological Seminary)"Read everything in the IVP Contours of Theology series. Pure gold." (Kevin DeYoung, senior pastor at University Reformed Church in East Lansing, Michigan)"For several years evangelicals have lacked a satisfactory textbook on ecclesiology. Clowney . . . has filled that gap with this fine survey volume . . . . The evangelical church will profit greatly from careful attention to the fruits of his labor." (Bibliotheca Sacra)

Edmund P. Clowney (1917-2005) received his B.A. from Wheaton College in 1939, a Th.B. from Westminster Theological Seminary in 1942, an S.T.M. from Yale University Divinity School in 1944 and a D.D. from Wheaton College in 1966. Ordained in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, he served as pastor of several churches from 1942 to 1946 and was then invited to become assistant professor of practical theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in 1952. He became that institution's first president in 1966, and he remained there until 1984, when he took a post as theologian-in-residence at Trinity Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Charlottesville, Virginia. In 1990, Clowney moved to Escondido, California, where he served as adjunct professor at Westminster Seminary California. In 2001, he took a full-time position as associate pastor at Christ the King Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Houston, Texas. After two years, he returned to Charlottesville, where he resumed part-time the post of theologian-in-residence at Trinity Presbyterian Church. He remained in this role until his death. Clowney was instrumental in the birth or growth of such ministries as the Reformed Theological Seminary in Aix-en-Provence, France; Westminster Seminary California; Trinity Church, Charlottesville; the Lausanne Conference; InterVarsity ministries, both in the United States and in England; and "The Westminster Ministerial Institute," an inner-city training program for pastors in Philadelphia, out of which was grown the Center for Urban Theological Studies. Clowney is remembered by many as a preacher, perhaps the most gifted proponent and practitioner of redemptive-historical preaching of this generation. His writing also displays the great theme of his life, namely Christ's presence in the whole of Scripture and his present work in the church. His books include *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, *Called to the Ministry*, *Christian Meditation*, *Doctrine and the Church*, *The Message of 1 Peter*, *The Unfolding Mystery* and *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*. Clowney left a legacy not only of written book and articles, but also a great number of sermons and lectures, as well as magazine columns such as the humorous "Eutychus and His Pin" for *Christianity Today* and Bible studies for *Tabletalk*.

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/attractational 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 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. The book is an academic work, so it reads a little on the dry side, but the material in it is of tremendous value, especially in a time when it seems people consider their preferences and pragmatism to be as important as Scripture. Clowney's work points everything back to the Bible as the starting point for the discussion. Especially helpful to me was the discussion over the three aspects of the church's mission (worship to God, encouragement to believers, and evangelism to the world). In my experience, it seems one or more of these aspects is emphasized to the detriment of the others, such as the popular statement that "the church is the only institution that exists for the sake of those outside itself." Clowney's work here helps correct these erroneous conclusions that are ultimately unhelpful. That is not to say that everything in this work is equally helpful. There are a few points on which I disagreed with the author, most notably during his discussion of infant baptism. For the most part, however, the book is broad enough that it does not take sides on the issues that have traditionally divided Protestant denominations. If you are looking for a work that is a strong introduction to Ecclesiology (the doctrine of the church) and don't mind reading something akin to a textbook, then *The Church* is worth your consideration.

The author taught at Westminster Theological Seminary which should tell you something. The book

explains in detail the doctrine of the church. What are the elders, what are the gifts, function, purpose, mission and existence of the church.

Clowney is always good, and he did not disappoint in this book. This book will revitalize your love for the Church.

Well written with suburb content. Should be helpful to all who want to be a part of a God-honoring, Gospel proclaiming body of believers.

the book is in good conditionthanks

It arrived early and as described in the description :)

Great!

I am a seminary student at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. This book was required reading for a theology class.I found it to be an average resource with limited original perspective and very little application. It was a decent review of the theology of the church, full of Bible references and following the Reformed perspective typical of this particular series.It did not engage the issues of women in ministry or the contemporary application of spiritual gifts to my satisfaction.I would only buy this book again if I needed a reference for Reformed theology on this topic. Most of the concepts and references in this resource can be found elsewhere to greater depth and with more engagement of alternative perspectives.Jonathan

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