

b. The visible Church

On the other hand the Church is made up of professing believers, whose profession is visible to human beings. Some of these are true believers and some are not: "They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us." (I John 2:19). The occasional need for extreme discipline also points up the validity of the distinction. Thus the apostle Paul writes: "For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves." (I Corinthians 5:12-13). He goes on to say: "Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God." (I Corinthians 6:9-10).

2. Space Aspects

a. The Universal Church

The universal Church is the Church as it is found throughout the world. At times the catholic or universal church is identified with the invisible Church. Thus the Belgic Confession states: "We believe and profess one catholic or universal Church, which is a holy congregation of true Christian believers, all expecting their salvation in Jesus Christ, being washed by His blood, sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit." (Article 27). And the Westminster Confession states: "The catholic or universal Church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all." (Chapter 25). However, for the sake of clarity it might be better to use the term "universal Church" when we are referring to the Church throughout the world, whether we are speaking of it as invisible or visible.

b. The Local Church

The local church is the local body of professing believers, together with their officers, that carry on the functions of the Church.

3. Time Aspects

a. The Church of All Ages

b. The Old Testament Church, the New Testament Church

c. The Church of One Time Period (e.g., the twentieth-century Church)