

Church Membership Vow #4

Do you promise to support the Church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?

XXV. Of the Church

25:1 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 fulness of Him that filleth all in all.(1)

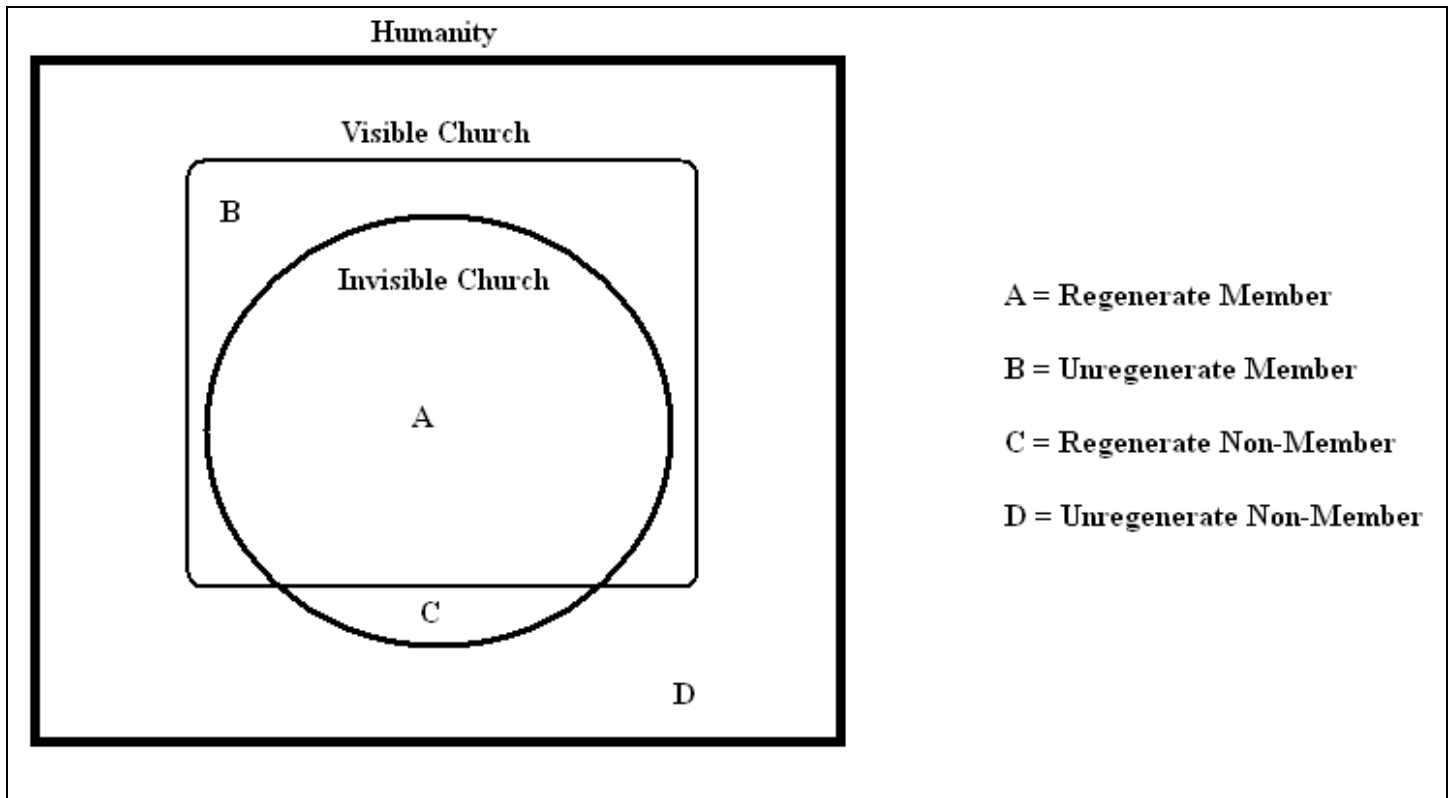
(1)Eph. 1:10,22,23; Eph. 5:23,27,32; Col. 1:18

Ephesians 1:9-14 ⁹ He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him ¹⁰ with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, *that is*, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him ¹¹ also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, ¹² to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. ¹³ In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory.

25:2 The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the Gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion;(1) and of their children:(2) and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ,(3) the house and family of God,(4) out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.(5)

(1)1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Cor. 12:12,13; Ps. 2:8; Rev. 7:9; Rom. 15:9-12 (2)1 Cor. 7:14; Acts 2:39; Ezek. 16:20,21; Rom. 11:16; Gen. 3:15; Gen. 17:7 (3)Matt 13:47; Isa. 9:7 (4)Eph. 2:19; Eph. 3:15 (5)Acts 2:47

Acts 2:46-47 ⁴⁶ Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.



25:3 Unto this catholic visible Church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints, in this life to the end of the world: and doth, by His own presence and Spirit, according to His promise, make them effectual thereunto.

(1) 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11,12,13; Matt. 28:19,20; Isa. 59:21

Ephesians 4:11-13 ¹¹ And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

25:4 This catholic Church hath been sometimes more, sometimes less visible.(1) And particular Churches, which are members thereof, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the Gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them.(2)

(1)Rom. 11:3,4; Rev. 12:6,14 (2)Rev. 2 and 3 throughout; 1 Cor. 5:6,7

- See the description of the seven churches of Revelation 2-3

25:5 The purest Churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error;(1) and some have so degenerated, as to become no Churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan.(2) Nevertheless, there shall be always a Church on earth, to worship God according to His will.(3)

(1)1 Cor. 13:12; Rev. 2 and 3; Matt. 13:24-30,47 (2)Rev. 18:2; Rom. 11:18-22 (3)Matt. 16:18; Ps. 72:17; Ps. 102:28; Matt. 28:19,20

Matthew 16:18 ¹⁸ "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

25:6 There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ.(1) Nor can the Pope of Rome, in any sense, be head thereof.(2)

(1)Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22 (2)Matt. 23:8-10; 2 Thess. 2:3,4,8,9; Rev. 13:6

Ephesians 1:22-23 ²² And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

XXVI. Of the Communion of Saints

26:1 All saints, that are united to Jesus Christ their Head, by His Spirit, and by faith, have fellowship with Him in His graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory:(1) and, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces,(2) and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.(3)

(1)1 John 1:3; Eph. 3:16-19; John 1:6; Eph. 2:5,6; Phil. 3:10; Rom. 6:5,6; 2 Tim. 2:12 (2)Eph. 4:15,16; 1 Cor. 12:7; 1 Cor. 3:21-23; Col. 2:19 (3)1 Thess. 5:11,14; Rom. 1:11,12,14; 1 John 3:16-18; Gal. 6:10

1 John 3:16-18 ¹⁶ We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. ¹⁷ But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? ¹⁸ Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

26:2 Saints by profession are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification;(1) as also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities. Which communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended unto all those who, in every place, call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.(2)

(1)Heb. 10:24,25; Acts 2:42,46; Isa. 2:3; 1 Cor. 11:20 (2)Acts 2:44,45; 1 John 3:17; 2 Cor. Chapters 8 and 9; Acts 11:29,30

Hebrews 10:23-25 ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; ²⁴ and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

26:3 This communion which the saints have with Christ, doth not make them in any wise partakers of the substance of His Godhead; or to be equal with Christ in any respect: either of which to affirm is impious and blasphemous.(1) Nor doth their communion one with another, as saints, take away, or infringe the title or propriety which each man hath in his goods and possessions.(2)

(1)Col. 1:18,19; 1 Cor. 8:6; Isa. 42:8; 1 Tim. 6:15,16; Ps. 45:7; Heb. 1:8,9 (2)Exod. 20:15; Eph. 4:28; Acts 5:4

Acts 5:4 ⁴ "While it remained *unsold*, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."

XXI. Of Religious Worship, and the Sabbath Day

21:1 The light of nature showeth that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all; is good, and doth good unto all; and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the might. (1) But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will, that He may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture. (2)

(1) Rom 1:20; Acts 17:24; Ps. 119:68; Jer. 10:7; Ps. 31:23; Ps. 18:3; Rom. 10:12; Ps. 62:8; Josh. 24:14; Mark 12:33. (2) Deut. 12:32; Matt. 15:9,10; Deut. 15:1-20; Exod. 20:4,5,6; Col. 2:23.

Exodus 20:4-6 ⁴ "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. ⁵ "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,

The Regulative Principle of Worship / Substance, Elements, Forms, and Circumstances

Derek Thomas: "Stated succinctly, the regulative principle of worship, as historically understood, can be defined this way: nothing must be required as essential to public worship except that which is commanded by the word of God."¹

Ligon Duncan: "In order to sharpen this principle and make it more perspicuous and useful, Reformed theologians speak about the substance of corporate worship (*the content of its prescribed parts or elements*), the elements of worship (*its components or specific parts*), the forms of worship (*the way in which these elements of worship are carried out*), and the circumstances of worship (*incidental matters that of necessity demand a decision but that are not specifically commanded in the word*)."²

21:2 Religious worship is to be given to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and to Him alone: (1) not to angels, saints, or any other creature: (2) and, since the fall, not without a mediator; nor in the mediation of any other but of Christ alone. (3)

(1) Matt. 4:10; John 5:23; 2 Cor. 13:14. (2) Col. 2:18; Rev. 19:10; Rom. 1:25. (3) John 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5; Eph. 2:18; Col. 3:17.

Matthew 15:8-9 ⁸ "THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. ⁹ "BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN."

¹ Derek W.H. Thomas, "The Regulative Principle: Responding to Recent Criticism" in *Give Praise to God: A Vision for Reforming Worship*, eds. Philip Graham Ryken, Derek W.H. Thomas, and J. Ligon Duncan III (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2003), 75.

² J. Ligon Duncan III, "Does God Care How We Worship?" in *Give Praise to God: A Vision for Reforming Worship*, eds. Philip Graham Ryken, Derek W.H. Thomas, and J. Ligon Duncan III (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2003), 23 (emphasis added).

21:3 Prayer, with thanksgiving, being one special part of religious worship,(1) is by God required of all men;(2) and, that it may be accepted, it is to be made in the name of the Son,(3) by the help of His Spirit,(4) according to His will,(5) with understanding, reverence, humility, fervency, faith, love, and perseverance;(6) and, if vocal, in a known tongue.(7)

(1)Phil. 4:6. (2)Ps. 65:2. (3)John 14:13,14; 1 Pet. 2:5. (4)Rom. 8:26. (5)1 John 5:14. (6)Ps. 47:7; Eccl. 5:1,2; Heb. 12:28; Gen. 18:27; James 5:16; James 1:6,7; Mark 11:24; Matt. 6:12,14,15; Col. 4:2; Eph. 6:18. (7)1 Cor. 14:14.

21:4 Prayer is to be made for things lawful,(1) and for all sorts of men living, or that shall live hereafter;(2) but not for the dead,(3) not for those of whom it may be known that they have sinned the sin unto death.(4)

(1)1 John 5:14. (2)1 Tim. 2:1,2; John 17:20; 2 Sam. 7:29; Ruth 4:12. (3)2 Sam. 12:21,22,23; Luke 16:25,26; Rev. 14:13. (4)1 John 5:16.

1 John 5:14 ¹⁴ This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

21:5 The reading of Scriptures with godly fear;(1) the sound preaching,(2) and conscionable hearing of the Word, in obedience unto God, with understanding, faith, and reverence;(3) singing of Psalms with grace in the heart;(4) as also, the due administration and worthy receiving of the sacraments instituted by Christ; are all parts of the ordinary religious worship of God:(5) besides religious oaths,(6) vows,(7) solemn fastings,(8) and thanksgivings upon special occasions,(9) which are, in their several times and seasons, to be used in an holy and religious manner.(10)

(1)Acts 15:21; Rev. 1:3. (2)2 Tim. 4:2. (3)James 1:22; Acts 10:33; Matt. 13:19; Heb. 4:2; Isa. 66:2. (4)Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19; James 5:13. (5)Matt. 28:19; 1 Cor. 11:23-29; Acts 2:42. (6)Deut. 6:13; Neh. 10:29. (7)Isa. 19:21; Eccl. 5:4,5. (8)Joel 2:12; Esther 4:16; Matt. 9:15; 1 Cor. 7:5. (9)Ps. 107; Esther 9:22. (10) Heb. 12:28.

Elements of Worship

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| (1) Reading of Scripture | (6) Oaths |
| (2) Sound Preaching | (7) Vows |
| (3) Conscionable Hearing | (8) Solemn Fastings |
| (4) Singing of Psalms | (9) Thanksgivings |
| (5) Sacraments (baptism & the Lord's supper) | |

21:6 Neither prayer, nor any other part of religious worship, is now, under the Gospel, either tied unto, or made more acceptable by, any place in which it is performed, or towards which it is directed;(1) but God is to be worshipped everywhere(2) in spirit and truth;(3) as, in private families(4) daily,(5) and in secret, each one by himself;(6) so more solemnly in the public assemblies, which are not carelessly or wilfully to be neglected or forsaken, when God, by His Word or providence, calleth thereunto.(7)

(1)John 4:21. (2)Mal. 1:11; Tim. 2:8. (3)John 4:23,24. (4)Jer. 10:25; Deut. 6:6,7; Job 1:5; 2 Sam. 6:18,20; 1 Pet. 3:7; Acts 10:2. (5)Matt. 6:11. (6)Matt. 6:6; Eph. 6:18. (7)Isa. 56:6,7; Heb. 10:25; Prov. 1:20,21,24; Prov. 8:34; Acts 13:42; Luke 4:16; Acts 2:42.

Hebrews 10:25 ²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

21:7 As it is the law of nature, that, in general, a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God; so, in His Word, by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment binding all men in all ages, He hath particularly appointed one day in seven, for a Sabbath, to be kept holy unto Him:(1) which, from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, was the last day of the week; and, from the resurrection of Christ, was changed into the first day of the week,(2) which, in Scripture, is called the Lord's Day,(3) and is to be continued to the end of the world, as the Christian Sabbath.(4)

(1)Exod. 20:8,10,11; Isa. 56:2,4,6,7. (2)Gen. 2:2,3; 1 Cor. 16:1,2; Acts 20:7. (3)Rev. 1:10. (4)Exod. 20:8,10; Matt. 5:17,18.

Acts 20:7 ⁷ On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul *began* talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.

1 Corinthians 16 ¹ Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. ² On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come.

Revelation 1:10 ¹⁰ I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like *the sound* of a trumpet,

21:8 This Sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord, when men, after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering of their common affairs beforehand, do not only observe an holy rest, all the day, from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations;(1) but also are taken up, the whole time, in the public and private exercises of His worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy.(2)

(1)Exod. 20:8; Exod. 16:23,25,26,29,30; Exod. 31:15; Neh. 13:15-19,21,22. (2)Isa. 58:13; Matt. 12:1-13.

Mark 2:23-28 ²³ And it happened that He was passing through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples began to make their way along while picking the heads *of grain*. ²⁴ The Pharisees were saying to Him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" ²⁵ And He said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and he and his companions became hungry; ²⁶ how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar *the* high priest, and ate the consecrated bread, which is not lawful for *anyone* to eat except the priests, and he also gave it to those who were with him?" ²⁷ Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. ²⁸ "So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."