

## **An Exposition of the 2<sup>nd</sup> (1689) London Baptist Confession**

### **Chapter 26.1-4: Of the Church**

**26.1** The catholic or universal church, which (with respect to the internal work of the Spirit and truth of grace) may be called 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 fills all in all.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Heb. 12:23; Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:10, 22–23, 5:23, 27, 32

1. The catholic or universal church.
  - a. What does “catholic” mean?
  - b. Is catholic synonymous with universal?
2. The invisible church.
  - a. The reality is invisible to us – it is an internal work of the Spirit.
  - b. The true church is made up of the whole number of the elect.
  - c. All the elect will be gathered into one body.

**26.2** All persons throughout the world, professing the faith of the gospel, and obedience unto God by Christ according unto it, not destroying their own profession by any errors everting the foundation, or unholiness of conversation, are and may be called visible saints;<sup>a</sup> and of such ought all particular congregations to be constituted.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> 1 Cor. 1:2; Acts 11:26 <sup>b</sup> Rom. 1:7; Eph. 1:20–22

1. Who are the visible saints?
  - a. All who profess the faith of the gospel.
  - b. All who profess obedience unto God by Christ according to the gospel.
  - c. All who do not destroy their profession by overturning or subverting the foundation.
  - d. All who do not destroy their profession by unholiness of conduct (conversation).
2. Visible saints should constitute local congregations.

**26.3** The purest churches under heaven are subject to mixture and error;<sup>a</sup> and some have so degenerated as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan;<sup>b</sup> nevertheless Christ always has had, and ever shall have a kingdom in this world, to the end thereof, of such as believe in him, and make profession of his name.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> 1 Cor. 5; Rev. 2–3 <sup>b</sup> Rev. 18:2; 2 Thess. 2:11–12 <sup>c</sup> Matt. 16:18; Ps. 72:17, 102:28; Rev. 12:17

1. There is no perfect church.
  - a. All are subject to inconsistencies and errors.
  - b. Some may become synagogues of Satan.
2. Christ will always have a kingdom in this world made up of believers and professors.

**26.4** The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the church, in whom, by the appointment of the Father, all power for the calling, institution, order or government of the church, is invested in a supreme and sovereign manner;<sup>a</sup> neither can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof, but is that antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalts himself in the church against Christ, and all that is called God; whom the Lord shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Col. 1:18; Matt. 28:18–20; Eph. 4:11–12 <sup>b</sup> 2 Thess. 2:2–9

1. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the church.
  - a. He alone has the power to call, institute and order the government of the church.
  - b. This power is invested in Him in a supreme and sovereign manner.
2. Neither the Pope nor any other can be the head of the church.
3. The Pope is “that antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition.”
  - a. The historical context and key matter of concern.
    - i. The Pope (papacy) exalts himself in the church against Christ.
    - ii. The Lord will judge him (them) at His coming.
  - b. Westminster, Savoy, and modern applications.