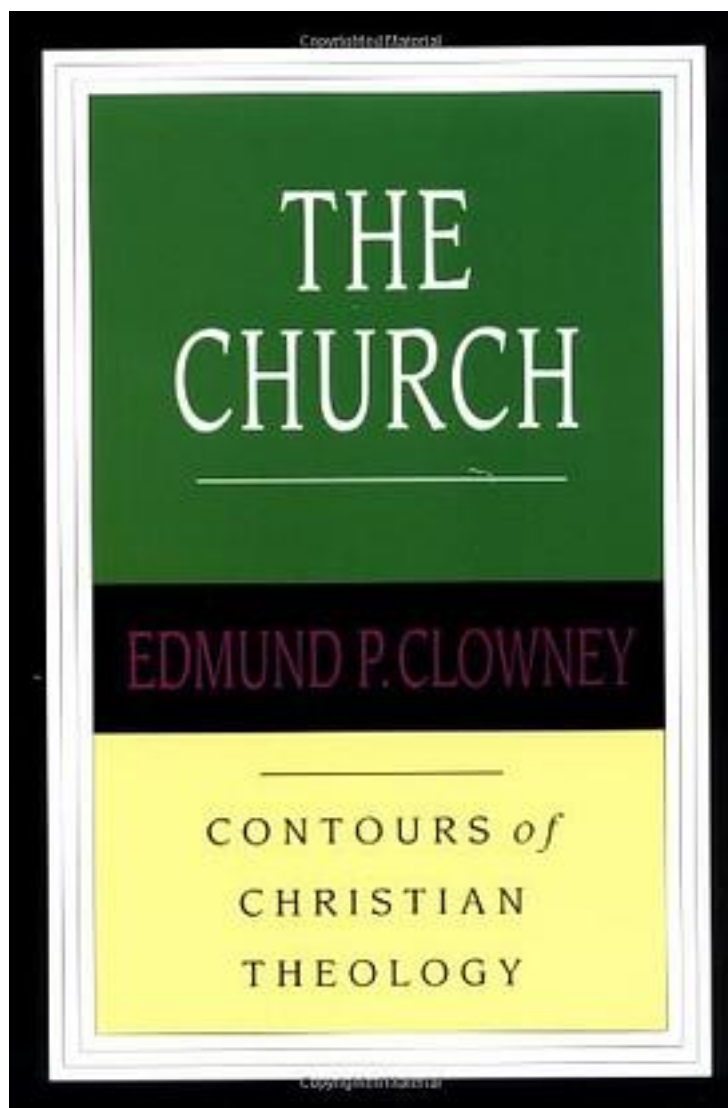


The Church



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From the struggles of the very first Christians to the challenges and scandals of today, the Catholic Church has wrestled with how to organize itself, express its beliefs, and nurture its members. The Church has grown from a handful of disciples in the first century to over one billion members in the twenty-first, resulting in profound changes that demand a theological response. In this sweeping history, renowned scholar Richard McBrien reveals the evolution of the Church's relationship to the divine, its leadership of the faithful, and its role as a global religion. The Church answers the questions raised by this extraordinary history, including: Where did the idea of the pope's infallibility come from? Why are priests celibate and women barred from the priesthood? What inspired the Inquisition? What was the position of the Catholic Church on Hitler's policies in World War II? What is the Church's relationship to Islam? How will the growth of the Church in South America, Africa, and Asia shape its future? McBrien helps the reader understand the evolution of the Catholic Church's understanding of itself through the centuries, its leadership, and its relationship to national governments and world religions. From Jesus's apostle Peter to Pope Benedict XVI, The Church explains in layperson's terms the evolution of the Catholic Church, its power, its scope, its theology, and its influence.

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