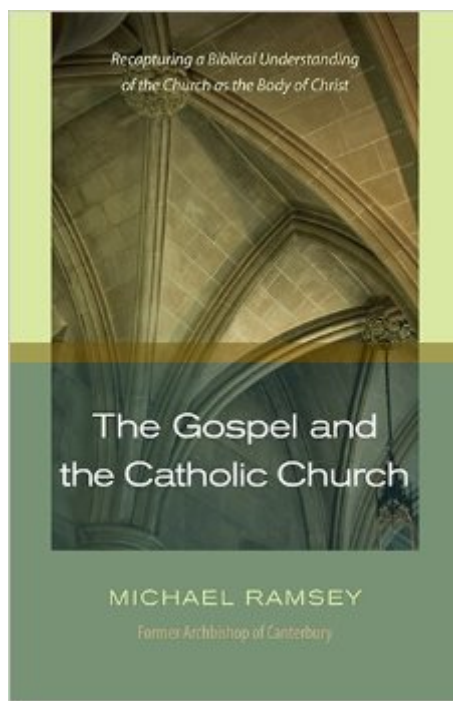


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# The Gospel And Catholic Church



## Synopsis

This reissue of Archbishop Ramsey's classic theological study of Anglican views of the church is important for students of ecumenism, and for those concerned with the relationship between Christ and the church in the New Testament. Although some of the book is dated, its conviction that "the church's meaning lies in its fulfillment of the sufferings of Christ" and that "every part of its history is intelligible in terms of the Passion" remains perceptive and challenging. Examining Scripture, doctrine, and history, Ramsey paints an intricate portrait of the church as an example of Christ's death and resurrection. He explores Eastern orthodox doctrine; explains the purposes and preconditions of the Reformation; and calls for a renewal of liturgical worship and reconciliation within the communion of the saints. Originally published in 1936 while he was serving as sub-warden of Lincoln Theological College, this was Ramsey's first book. After more than seventy years, its wisdom concerning the relationship between Catholic and Evangelical, and the underlying complementarities and tensions which characterize the Anglican tradition, remains theologically sound and biblically astute.

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## Customer Reviews

Michael Ramsey's "The Gospel and the Catholic Church" continues to be a vital work exploring the true relationship between the gospel message and the Church. I highly recommend it to a wide range of readers. It's not an easy read, but the educated layperson, clergy, teachers and others will be amply rewarded by a patient reading of what Ramsey has to say. Throughout history either the

gospel or the Church have often been obscured, and part of Ramsey's thesis is that the two are part of the same thing and can never be separated without doing harm to both. Ramsey states that he wrote this book "as a study of the Church, and its doctrine, and unity and structure, in terms of the gospel of Christ crucified and risen." Throughout the book Ramsey articulates his thesis in ways similar to what he writes in Chapter IV on The Meaning of Unity: "For the good news that God has visited and redeemed His people includes the redeemed man's knowledge of death and resurrection through his place in the one visible society [the Church] and through the death to self which every member and group has died." In other words, Ramsey sees church order, particularly the Episcopate as a continuation of the Apostolate, as being an integral part of the gospel message itself. Ramsey is quite convincing in his thesis, and his understanding of the relationship between the gospel and the Church merits a close reading by Christians and churches. If we all understood what Ramsey is getting at, there would be a better chance for reunion among the churches. Ramsey's theology also helps prevent the rampant individualism and subjectivism of modern Christianity, as well as inoculate the church against a dead institutionalism. Modern-day Gnosticism, in which the Body of Christ and the human body are not very valued, is also vanquished by the truth of what Ramsey teaches. Ramsey argues his point not only persuasively but also in a way we don't expect. We might have expected him to provide a rather defensive rationale for the episcopacy and the importance of the institutional Church and to have argued extensively from church history, especially the patristic era. What Ramsey does instead is to argue from the Scripture themselves, beginning with a profound theological discussion of the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection and the Church's participation in these. As Ramsey argues, "The death to self qua self, first in Christ and thence in the disciples, is the ground and essence of the Church." To say that "One died for all, therefore all died" is to describe the Church. To call the Church the Body of Christ, therefore, is not to see the Church as a collection of men but as Christ's own being and life. The Christian can never escape from the Church: it is a part of his own existence since it is a part of Christ Himself. In the Body, the self is found. This view stands against individualism and is safeguarded by the reality of the historical events of the life and death of Christ and the pre-existence of the Body before the conversion of the individual. Ultimately, this means that "from the deeds of Jesus in the flesh there springs a society which is one its continuous life." The unity of Christ's Body springs from the unity of God, is uttered in the Passion of Christ, and is expressed in an order and structure. This order and structure is found in the local church, which represents the universal Church. Ramsey finds that all throughout Paul's letters we find that Paul himself and the larger Apostolate are part of the structure of the Body and the means by which unity is preserved and propagated. Ramsey teaches

(in Chapter IV and V) that the marks of the Church, such as Baptism, Eucharist, bishops, the Bible, and the Creeds, declare (and do not obscure) the gospel. He then presents a view of "The Gospel and Episcopacy" (Chapter VI) in which he views the episcopate as the continuation of the order and authority of the Apostles, who were the Church's link to the historical events of the life of Christ and the representatives of the one society. Ramsey accomplishes all of this in Part I. In Part II, Ramsey asks the question, "How far has Catholicism borne witness to the true doctrine of the Body of Christ, which includes the Gospel of the Cross?" In Part I Ramsey argued that the gospel created the structure of the one Body whose outward marks were Scripture, Creeds, Sacraments, and the Episcopate. Ramsey concludes, in Part II, that in the patristic era, the Fathers expounded Christ the Redeemer in such a way that the Church is included in their exposition (this is more true for the Greek Fathers). Ramsey spends Chapters XI and XII discussing the Western Church and ways in which the development of Catholicism in the West, first in Roman Catholicism and then in the Reformation, tended to get things wrong. The West had a tendency to become legalistic, and the Church began to be more of an institution than an organism. While the Reformers (especially Calvin) valued Church order, their emphasis on the invisible Church, over time, led to a divorce of the gospel and the Church. (By the way, I think Ramsey's criticisms of Roman Catholicism and the Reformation are spot on but that he is too uncritical of the Eastern churches.) Ramsey's Chapter XIII on "Ecclesia Anglicana" was especially worthwhile, for in it he demonstrates how Anglicanism "appealed to the Bible along lines very different from those of the Lutherans and Calvinists; for it appealed also to the primitive church with its structures and traditions, and thus interpreted the Bible in its true context." Ramsey also wisely recognizes that the Church of England "declared the truth that the church in England was not a new foundation nor a local realization of the invisible Church, but the expression on English soil of the one historical and continuous visible Church of God." Because Ramsey is dealing with one of the most important points of theology - the relationship between the gospel and the Church - his book is of immense value to the Church. The discerning reader will come away with a much richer understanding of Christ as He comes to us through both the gospel and the Church.

Michael Ramsey's "The Gospel and the Catholic Church" continues to be a vital work exploring the true relationship between the gospel message and the Church. I highly recommend it to a wide range of readers. It's not an easy read, but the educated layperson, clergy, teachers and others will be amply rewarded by a patient reading of what Ramsey has to say. Throughout history either the gospel or the Church have often been obscured, and part of Ramsey's thesis is that the two are part

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Must have reference for personal library of all Anglo-Catholics. Written by former Archbishop of Canterbury. Especially helpful for those new to the Catholic tradition of Anglicanism.

Excellent resources for Anglicans.

Read Ramsey,,,,

It is the classic essay enlightening the readers to link between the gospel and the church which sometimes is lost.

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