

the Jews, assemble together in one place at stated times to observe the institutions of the gospel. It is necessarily divided into a great many societies and associations, but still each is an integral part of the Universal Church, and may, with propriety, be called, *the Church*. There is no law of heaven fixing a certain number of persons, as being absolutely necessary to the formation, or existence of a Church. Wherever there are two or three professing faith in Christ, they may by virtue of his warrant and appointment, meet for religious conversation and devotional exercises. Our Lord declares, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Such a society, though not organized with Office-bearers, has a public profession—the essential characteristic of a Church, and is also an integral part of the Universal visible Church. A religious family, in which the several parts of worship are daily performed, is, from the head of it being ruler, religious teacher, and leader of the devotional exercises, to some extent an organized church. We read of the church, "in the house of Aquila and Priscilla," and of the church, "in the house of Nymphas." There may have been others associated with these families in religious worship and christian communion. Be this however as it may, in as much as each of these families made, separately, a public profession of the true religion,—each exhibited an essential characteristic of *the Church*, and was an integral part of the Universal visible Church. One congregation of men and women professing subjection to the Gospel of Christ, observing the ordinances of religion and having a compliment of office-bearers, to teach, rule, exercise discipline, and manage its affairs, is the Church regularly organized; but still, it is only an integral part of the Universal visible Church. Such was the Church of Ephesus; the office-bearers of which Paul exhorted, saying: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." (Act. 20, 28.) A number of regularly organized congregations, associated together under one general jurisdiction, for mutual edification and the defence of the truths of the Gospel, is *the Church*; but still, it is only an integral part of the Universal visible Church. All the disciples in Antioch are called the Church; but it is obvious from their being called "a great number" and "much people" that there must have been, at least, more than one congregation of them. All the disciples in Jerusalem are called *the Church*; but as there were many thousands of them, and as the Apostles continued a long time after the day of Pentecost, labouring among them, there must have been several congregations of them. The minister and elders of a single congregation, or of a number of associated congregations are, in their meetings to decide controversies, give advice, and to administer discipline,—the Church: because they are freely chosen to their several offices by the congregation, or congregations to which they belong, their acts are authoritatively, the acts of the whole congregation, or asso-