

II.

The greatness of the objects which the Church is organized to accomplish—the profound significance of its mission—invests the study of the characteristics and work of a true Church with deep importance. It is full of interest to study the means by which God carries out His purposes in the material world—the laws that regulate the varied forces of nature. It is instructive to study even the inventions and contrivances of human skill, in the different departments of activity, for developing the resources of nature and promoting the physical well-being of men. But how much more worthy of our thoughtful study are the agencies and laws of the spiritual kingdom—the divinely instituted society through which God works in bringing back a fallen and alienated world to loyalty and purity! The highest results of human invention relate to the earthly and temporary interests of men. But the work of the Church lies in the sphere of moral and spiritual entities; and deals with those faculties and capacities of our nature on which the original image of the Creator was enstamped. It is the mission of the Church, by the dissemination of revealed truth, to scatter the obscuring shadows of ignorance of God which enshroud the world. To unveil to sinful men their guilt and danger, and the ample provisions of the Divine Father's mercy for their salvation through Christ. So to present the compassion, purity, and unselfishness of Christ in the lives of her members, that the children of disobedience and rebellion may be won by the beauty of practical holiness. So to proclaim the warnings and promises of Divine love, that the erring prodigals of earth may be brought back to their offended Father. To contend earnestly against all forms of antagonism to truth and holiness, till the kingdoms of this world "become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ." And by the glorious victories won over the powers of darkness and sin, to make known, not only to men below, but also "to the principalities and powers in heavenly places," the wondrous grace and " manifold wisdom of God." The study of the instrumental agency, by which such glorious results are to be achieved, is not merely a matter of speculative interest, but a duty of practical necessity. For, unless we learn from the Word of God what is the Divine ideal, we