

ORIGINAL COMMUNICATIONS.

ON THE CHURCH.

In the present day we frequently hear that it is our duty, not to separate from the Church; and the different bodies of Christians, not in communion with the national establishment: are confounded with heretics, and schismatics, or those who cause offences in the christian world. So greatly do some writers mystify the subject, that it is difficult, if not impossible for plain people, to determine what they ought to believe in reference to this point. It must be conceded that it is of the utmost importance to be members of the true Church, for out of its pale there is no salvation. But where is the true Church? How is it to be known? What are its marks? And how shall it be satisfactorily ascertained, that we are of its communion?

And first,—Where is the true Church? It is in heaven, and on earth. In heaven it is triumphant; on earth militant. Shall we look into any particular country, or shall we look abroad in the world, in order to find it, in its militant state? The true Church must be catholic, or universal, consequently it is not to be found *exclusively* in Rome, or in England: any more than at their antipodes. The Saviour, commanded the Gospel to be preached to every creature, and that Gospel cannot be preached in vain—therefore, no doubt, in various parts of the world, true Christians may be found, and the Church exists, although it may be the Church that is in some house; as was the case in the time of the Apostles themselves; and therefore it is contended that the true Church exists not in any particular national establishment, or body of christians,—but that the members of it, are to be found amongst all those bodies, which hold the head, even Christ. Nor does this view of the subject interfere with, much less destroy the unity of the Church, which is indeed one great note, or mark of it, (as will be shown at length) for there is "One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Eph. iv. 5, 6. The Papists contend that the Romish Church, and those in communion with it, are the only true Church; and that all others are heretics, and schismatics; and consequently, his Grace of Canterbury, is, by all those who are consistent with that creed, denounced an heretic, as well as the humblest individual, be he clerical, or lay, who dissents from them, or who separates from that body. Others there are, who professing a purer creed, and adhering to a more wholesome discipline, lay claim to this character, by setting up the plea of apostolical succession, and the divine appointment of episcopacy. A third party, which comprises those, who differ widely upon some points of doctrine, (not essential to salvation) and the matter of Church government, consider the true Church to be those who love our Lord Jesus Christ, in sincerity, and in truth, and give evidence of that love, by *their* love and affection, for all those who bear that name, and walk as becometh the Gospel of Christ, be they, Episcopalians or Presbyterians, Methodists or Baptists, or indeed any other name. The assumption that the Dissenters, or Methodists, are the only true Church, would be as absurd, and conse-

quently as *destitute of all proof*, as to say that the Church of Rome, or of England, is the *only* true Church. It is only a Church, and they are Churches, but none in any, or all of these communions belong to the Church, in the scriptural sense of that expression, but those who have the *Spirit of Christ*,—"for if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." The true Church is not to be known by the assertions of Papists, or bigotted Episcopalians, nor by the pretensions of any sect, to superior sanctity, and religion: but by those marks, which in holy writ, are made characteristic of it. This leads us to enquire, what those marks are? Holiness is the grand characteristic, or mark, of the true Church,—this appears from the language of the Apostle, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, where he addresses himself, to the saints, i. e., the holy persons. Mr. Wesley remarks as follows,—
"The Church at Ephesus, as the Apostle himself explains it, means the holy persons that are in Ephesus, and there assemble themselves together to worship God the Father, and his son Jesus Christ; the Apostle considered the Church as one body, hence unity is another mark of it; but this unity does by no means imply that the members of the true Church, see eye to eye in those subordinate matters, or non-essential points, which are to be determined by time, place and circumstances. As the Bible is the religion of Protestants, if this was the case, we should dare to look for a detailed plan of Church-government, and a systematic form of doctrine,—whereas it gives us only the great principles of truth for our guidance, and directs us what course we are to pursue, in order to be led by the Spirit, into all truth; and by no means, makes an exact uniformity in opinions, modes of worship, or the discipline of the Church, characteristic of it; but, lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. Now there may be these holy affections in the heart, and evidenced in the life, of those who belong to different bodies of professing christians,—if so, what is the plain, and just inference? Why, that those persons, no matter what they are called, belong to the true Church, notwithstanding their minor differences of opinion, or modes of worship.

AMICUS.

[To be continued.]

ON DIVINE REVELATION.

BY THE REV. ALEXANDER W. MCLEOD.

MAN is a creature of God: His relationship to Deity indicates that he is under divine government, and accountable for his actions—unless we can embrace the absurd notion, that, after his creation, his Maker abandoned him to the uncertainties of chance, or the vagaries of his own imagination, and cast him off as unworthy of regard and undeserving of care. The unsoundness of this notion requires no other exposure, than, that which arises from the fact, that it contains an unjust reflection on the character, the perfections of an infinitely wise and good and just Being.

As a holy creature, such as he was when he first came from his Maker's hand, he required divine in-