

confident and reiterated claims to apostolical purity advanced by some Churches, chiefly on this ground. This is, indeed, a plea which may sound well in the ears of the ignorant, and of those who are superficially acquainted with the Sacred Writings, but to those who are critically versed in them, it must prove utterly unsatisfactory.

The best test of the purity and excellence of a Church, is obviously and unequivocally the spirit which it breathes, and the fruits which it produces; and of these fruits, humility and charity are the foremost. For "every one that exalteth himself, shall be abased," and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted;" and "By this, shall all men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have love one to another." It is not by high claims and exclusive pretensions—it is not by a zeal for secular power and dignity, or for the extension and aggrandisement of any external establishment of Christianity—for this, though apt to be mistaken for that noblest of all principles, a zeal for pure and undefiled religion, is oftener what the Apostle has denominated, a zeal without knowledge, the offspring of pride and ambition, partaking more of the spirit of this world, than of the lowliness and meekness which are in Christ;—it is not by the assertion of apostolical purity and primitive excellence, continually urged from the pulpit and the press, and the dwelling habitually on topics of externalities, as if they were the very essence of Christianity;—*and still less*—is it by depreciating other religious communions, either by innuendoes or open avowals—that a Church gives evidence of her Christian purity and excellence.

On the other hand, as previously avowed, we deem that a Christian Church affords the best evidence of her purity, when she manifests a spirit of humility and meekness towards all, and more especially towards those who differ from her—when she is more ready to commend the excellencies, than to point out and condemn the imperfections of rival establishments—when her virtues are not proclaimed as with the sound of a trumpet, but silently shine and manifest themselves to all by the brightness of their own light;—in fine, (for we think the same test applicable to Churches as to individuals,) the Church, in our opinion, which is least obtrusive in her pretensions, —least intolerant in her spirit—least selfish and exclusive in regard to her temporal interests and secular claims—"which seeketh not her own, but in honour preferreth others"—which rejoiceth in the good done by others, and so far from envying their success, or hindering their usefulness, is ever ready to encourage and support them—which urges no claims to superior veneration and attachment, but leaves her character and spirit to be estimated by the impartial judgment of others who are neutral, or even fearlessly commits it to the scrutiny of those who are opposed to her—and which seeketh the praise which is of God, rather than that which is of men—the Church, we repeat, which labours to advance the spirit and practice of true Religion on these principles, approximates, in our opinion, nearest to the standard of Christian purity.