

one in its nature and in God's design, it is viewed in different lights, and hence has arisen a corresponding variety of meanings.

The word church sometimes means the invisible, sometimes the church visible, and each of these expressions has different meanings. When the invisible church is spoken of in its most comprehensive sense, it means "the whole number of the redeemed, or whole number of real believers or Christians, whether in heaven or earth, that have been, are, or shall be." The whole number whom the all-seeing God, who alone sees the throng, knows are to be saved. Sometimes it means "the number of true believers in heaven"—sometimes "the number of true believers on earth." Again, when the visible church is spoken of, "the whole number of professing Christians in the world," is sometimes meant, and sometimes "any particular body of professing Christians who hold the same doctrines, as the church of Scotland or the church of Holland"—and sometimes is meant, by the term church, which is the sense with which the question now before us is more immediately concerned, "any body of professing Christians who worship together in the same place." It is no doubt true that when a church is spoken of, this loose and general meaning is sometimes attached to it—"all who are in any way connected, whether members or general hearers, in a particular congregation." But it is further true, and sad as true, that in the best regulated church that ever existed, God's all-seeing eye may discover even among those who are members and have made a solemn profession of their faith in Christ, some who are not true Christians. "They are not all Israel who are of Israel."

It might be shewn that in every sense

in which the word church is employed, the idea of its being a society composed of members of a distinctive character, is involved. But supposing the word were farther transferred from its right and original meaning than it is, it would only after all be sharing the common fate of many other words—and as to the thing really meant, we have God's book to tell us that his design, in a church, is to call a society out of the world to Himself.

It is common to hear it said that the persons who have not formally joined the church are often better Christians than they who have. This is surely a very loose way of speaking: and unless it be meant by it that there should be no such thing as members in a church, that is, persons *within* as distinguished from those *without*, it has no bearing upon the present question.

It is a melancholy fact that professors of the faith, or members of the church, but too often dishonour their profession. But is the maintaining the distinction between the world and the church the cause of this evil? or would the destroying or confounding all distinctions between one class of persons and another connected with a church cure it? The whole history of the church gives a testimony quite the reverse—that the purity of a church is likely to be in proportion to the pains taken in the admission of members—the impurity to the negligence.

But it is not supposed that those who are for giving equal rights in the election of the minister, to all in any way connected with a particular church or congregation, mean to dispute the propriety of membership, or to do away with all distinctions between one class and another. All, it is supposed, they mean to maintain is that the act of voting in the election of minister, is not so