

members of a religious society assemble together for public worship. There is, however, nothing in the world, about which men are more divided in their opinions, than in answering the question, *What is the Church?* Every religious sect appropriates the title, *Church*, to itself; and some sects—particularly the Roman Catholic and Episcopalian—deny the right of any other sect, to assume the title. But it is not from the mere opinions, or assertions of arrogant men, that a satisfactory solution, can be formed to the question, *What is the Church?*—it is from the Word of God.

It cannot, indeed, be rationally supposed, that the Great King and Head of the Church ever intended that men should have any difficulty, in ascertaining, *What is the Church*; and none can feel any great difficulty, who submits to believe the response of the Holy Oracles of God. There can be no doubt, our Lord indoctrinated his Apostles, while he was with them on earth, in the knowledge of what is the Church: and there is abundant proof of their having been well instructed. For example,—when our Lord put the question to them: “But whom say ye that I am?” Simon Peter’s answer,—“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,”—evinces his saving knowledge, and clearly exhibits, the original foundation of the Church in its faith and profession. His answer was perfectly satisfactory: “And Jesus answered, and said unto him, Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matt. 16, 15—18). The foundation, founder, corner-stone, and builder of the Church, is “Christ, the Son of the living God:” and the faith, and profession of faith in this doctrine, is absolutely essential to salvation, and to the very constitution and existence of the Christian Church. God, by the word of the Gospel, calls men out of the world of mankind to this faith and the profession of it; and all, who by the Holy Ghost, “Can say that Jesus is the Lord,” believe with their hearts and confess with their mouths that besides Christ, “There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” These are, “Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling,” whom “God hath from the beginning chosen to salvation through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth.” And were they a multitude which no man could number, and distant from each other as the poles of the earth, they are one body in Christ, their living head,—united together by the bonds of love and devotion to Him, and have all “one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father.” This holy community excludes none from an equal participation of its invaluable immunities, on account of country, colour, language, kindred, or meanness of rank: “There is neither Greek, nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.” By the Holy Ghost they are all baptized into one body, and have fellowship