

according to the last, the Society of believers. All these descriptions come to the same thing, and include the same persons. A Protestant can, according to his theological standpoint, select which of these representations he prefers, without varying the substance of the doctrine affecting the recognized membership of the Church. We do not say that the abundant Scripture evidence of the Protestant idea of the Church will group itself with equal ease around any of these representations. We believe, on the contrary, that the view taken in our Standards is the strongest and the best, and that around which the Scripture testimony most naturally arranges itself.

On this we do not insist. The point of most importance is that the Church as set forth in the new Testament is not, in its widest conception, a mixed body made up of all sorts of men, good and bad. It is composed of "saints" and "the faithful in Christ Jesus." It is the body of Christ "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." It is a flock made up of sheep which hear Christ's voice and follow him—to whom he gives eternal life and they shall never perish. There are no hypocrites and no reprobates in this Church.

Protestants admit that the word Church has, in Scripture, various shades of meaning, but so far as sacred things are concerned, they are all derived from the general idea already stated. As every part of the Church, in the sense defined, has a common nature, or, in other words, is composed of those who believe in Christ and are the habitation of God, through the Spirit, it is evident the word Church may be applied appropriately, either to the entire body of Christ in all ages and lands (Col. i. 18) or to any smaller portion of it, united by some tie, on account of which it may be contemplated as a unit. This accounts for the manner in which we find it applied to Christ's professed followers, united in the bonds of ecclesiastical fellowship in a Province, a city, or even in a house. They are regarded and spoken of as being, in the judgment of charity, what they profess to be, a society or community of the members of Christ's mystical body. (Acts ix. 31. Revised, 2 Cor. i. 1, and Romans xvi., 5). In the New Testament, believers are required to associate themselves for Christian fellowship, mutual watch and care, and the extension of the Kingdom of Christ.