

congregation, to be considered as members of the society and entitled to have an equal right to act in the management of all its affairs? Is there, or is there not, in this society called the church, as in all other societies, a distinction between those who are *within* and those who are *without*, and a corresponding distinction in duties, rights and privileges—in a word, between membership and no membership?

The Scriptures must of course be our court of appeal in the matter. Now we learn the oneness and distinctiveness of the church in God's designs, not only in the way of definition and description, but in the way of history and observation.

The Bible might with propriety be designated "the history of God's plans in taking out of the world a people for himself;" and in many passages of the church's history we have the distinctness of the church from the world as visibly displayed as if we were actually standing upon some commanding eminence, and beholding, at the day of judgment, the line that is to divide between the dense multitudes on the right hand and on the left of the Judge of all.

On one occasion we see the whole world sinking under the waters of the deluge, and the little handful—the church—collected into one in the ark riding triumphantly amidst winds and waves.

On another occasion we see the ocean rising up to proclaim to all the ends of the earth the distinctness between the world and the church; making its deepest caverns a pathway of safety, and its billows walls of defence to the thousands that belonged to the church, and on the instant making itself a grave for each single one that did not.

Then what does the book of God oftener or more loudly reiterate than the command to keep the line of distinction

between the church and the world clear? And in what is the Book of the world more pathetic and impressive than in this, that by the church's losing her distinctive character, and uniting herself to the world, instead of uniting the world to her, she has always been shorn of her strength and robbed of her beauty.

But, as bearing more directly upon the point, is there not a distinct membership *within the church*, as distinguished from all *without*? Distinct and peculiar membership is God's grand design in regard to His church. It is of the very essence and nature of a church to have a membership of the strongest, most peculiar, and distinctive of all kinds. The church is a people taken out of the world and consecrated to Christ. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people;" and mark the distinctive character of its membership,—
"Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular; for we are members of his body, and of his flesh, and of his bones." True these are figurative descriptions. But why? Because no ordinary language is strong enough to describe the closeness, the peculiarity, the distinctiveness, of the membership in that society called the church. What an overwhelming view have we of the oneness and distinctiveness of the church in such a passage as this, "And the glory which thou hast given me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one."

It is true the word church is used in various senses. The strict and proper meaning of the compound word which we translate church is "called out of;" thus clearly denoting its distinctive character. But though the church is