

fillet all in all. The visible Church, which is also Catholic or Universal under the gospel, (not confined to one nation as before under the law,) consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children; and is the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation." Thus, concisely and scripturally, is the CHURCH defined by the Westminster Assembly. It is the kingdom which Christ claims as peculiarly his own. It is the glorious temple whose foundation he has laid, and whose stones he has cemented with his own tears and blood. The Church is the trembling, trustful bride: He is the bridegroom—generous, loving, self-sacrificing.

God alone knows how many may be members of the visible Church who are not members of the invisible Church. We are not called upon to judge the heart. The visible Church is warranted to admit into her communion all who make a credible profession of faith and godliness: it is prerogative of God to separate the true from the false. In the field of the world the tares and the wheat grow side by side, and God permits it to be so.

As there is a skeleton in every house, and a lame lamb in every flock, so there is a JUDAS in every congregation. At least it is not unreasonable to expect, among the nominal disciples of Christ, some men, who, foul and selfish at heart, are so skilfully *veneered* with cant and sanctimonious seeming that they may pass without question or rebuke. These must be left to the HEART SEARCHER. The day of trial and persecution, at all events the day of death, will reveal them in their true colours.

All the members of the Church should be pure and holy like Him who is the Head. The same grand current of divine life should course through their veins. They should wear the livery of Heaven, converse in its language and nurture its virtues in the recesses of their hearts. Their conduct should be unblameable; they should cheerfully obey all the commands of Christ, believing and cherishing His word, and keeping far off from heresy, schism and factious behaviour.

As the Church is the noblest, most important and influential society on earth, it is an incalculable honour to be admitted into her communion, and a terrible disaster to be excluded from her pale. It is a fearful thing to be a disloyal member of the Church; it may be still worse to be an open enemy. Out of the Church "there is no ordinary possibility of salvation," and though an ecclesiastical connection, without a saving union to Christ, avails nothing, yet this is what renders the exercise of discipline so deeply solemn. When a member is cut off he is "delivered unto Satan." He has fallen through sin, and the Church allows him to taste its bitterness. The aim, all the while, is blessing, not cursing, salvation not destruction. The voice of a Church court acting according to Scripture is the voice of God. The Bride of Christ, should be "without spot or wrinkle;" his house should be a model of purity and order; all who bear his name should depart from impurity, and be "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people."

Christ has made ample provision for securing the purity of the Church. He has left her his own holy example; he gave her apostles, evangelists, pastors; he has bequeathed to her in the Bible a code of laws which are equal to every emergency; and above all he has promised his Holy Spirit to lead her to all truth. She is not left in orphanage to mourn an absent Lord: his own promise is "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world!" What influence should this one fact exercise on the minds of those who are in any respect connected with the Church, whether as rulers or ruled! If you refuse to hear those who are over you *in the Lord*, you treat Christ's authority, not man's,