

From the Gospel Messenger.

"THE OLD PATHS;"

OR, THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH.

By G. Boyd.

"Thus saith the Lord: Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths; where is the good way and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."—Jer. vi. 16.

"Ex ipso ordine manifestatur, id esse Dominicum et verum quod sit prius traditum: id autem extraneum et falsum quod sit posterius immissum."—Tertullian.

"Christians, in all ages, are bound to make the apostolic order of the Church, with respect to the Ministry, as well as other points, the model, as far as possible, of all their ecclesiastical arrangements."—Dr. Miller.

NOTICE,

The following Tract has been prepared, and is published in compliance with a resolution adopted by the Vestry of St. John's Church, N. Liberties.

"Resolved, In compliance with the expressed wishes of many members of the congregation, that the Rev. Mr. Boyd be requested to prepare and to publish at the expense of this Vestry, 1000 copies of the Sermons which he lately preached on the subject of the Christian Church, in such form as he may think best suited for circulation in this congregation."

In preparing the following tract, the substance of the sermons has been preserved, while every thing not essential to the exegesis of the subject has been omitted. The request of the vestry is most cheerfully complied with, and the hopes is indulged, that God will bless both the delivery of the sermons, and the publication of the tract, to the advancement of his own glory.

G. B.

April 24, 1836.

To the Members of St. John's Church, in the North-corn Liberties, Philadelphia.

Brethren.—When, in the course of human events, the body of christians throughout the world becomes divided into numberless parts, differing essentially in their visible forms; each claiming to be scriptural, while in many instances they hold no fellowship with one another; it becomes a serious question with all who desire to "hold fast to the head," which of these several societies have retained the form which was originally given to the Church by the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

If he instituted a church, it had some form or other. An invisible society composed of men and women and children in the flesh, is an incomprehensibility. Has that form which was originally given to the church, been preserved entire by any one society of christians? If it has, then that is the model, according to which all other forms should be recast, and that the centre of unity around which all other parts should be gathered. Or is the original plan of the New Testament Church to be sought piecemeal, a part here and a part there, and a part with another denomination of christians? If so, let these parts be reunited, and all that has been superadded, and is of human invention, if not conducive to edification, be separated and abandoned.

My object in this communication, "dearly beloved in the Lord"—"called to be saints"—is to satisfy your "pure minds, by way of remembrance, that the Church of which you are the members, is not only like the Apostolic Church but it is identically the same; perpetuated in the good providence of God; preserved through all the dangers to which it has been exposed: disencumbered of the inventions of men, by which in different times, it has been disfigured; and only requiring the promised inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to make it "a praise in the earth."

I write not that you should be made proud of your privileges, but the more humbled, because you have not better improved them. I write not that you should be led to diminish aught of brotherly kindness, towards all who bear the Saviour's name, however they may differ from you in opinion; but to establish and

settle your minds upon the subject of the church of God; that so you may give your whole attention henceforth to a diligent improvement of the means of grace which you enjoy. God is my witness, I have sought to know the truth, persuaded that it is the only guide by which I can safely conduct myself or you to the heavenly inheritance. If others differ from us, let us be "fully persuaded in our own minds." If others wish to know the ground on which we build our faith, let them be informed in the spirit of meekness, love and fear. It will be my object to convince you of the truth of the following PROPOSITIONS:

I. The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a visible society; divinely constituted; for special purposes.
II. The Lord Jesus Christ instituted in this Church a ministry, to be perpetuated to the "end of the world;" which ministry consisted of three orders.

III. Such a society being instituted, and thus organized, it becomes the bounden duty of every one who hears the gospel, if he can find access to this Church, to connect himself with it;—and

IV. The "Protestant Episcopal Church" in the United States" is identically the same church as the apostolic, and has been continued in a direct and regular succession, from the time of the apostles to the present day.

If these four points can be satisfactorily proved, I hope your minds will ever hereafter remain at rest, "settled and grounded" in the conviction, that the Church to which you belong, is built upon the "Rock," Christ Jesus, and that the gates of hell will never be permitted to prevail against it.

I. PROPOSITION.

The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a visible society; divinely constituted; for special purposes.

I. The Church is a visible society. This is proved.

1. From its name—The Church. It is applied either to the whole Church militant, Mat. 16, 18. Eph. 5, 23 25. 27. Col. 1, 18, 24; or to the whole Church triumphant, Eph. 5, 27. comp. with Heb. 12, 23; or to a particular church, though consisting of several congregations, Acts 8, 1. (comp. ch. 5, 14, 6 7) 11 22. 1 Cor. 1, 2. Col. 4, 16. Rev. 14, 11. 20—2, 1, 8, &c.; or to a particular and single congregation of christians, Rom. 16, 15, 1 Cor. 16, 19. Col. 4, 15. In the latter sense, it is also applied in the plural number, Acts, 14, 28—16, 5, 1 Cor. 11, 16—14, 34—15, 9—16, 1. 1 Thes. 2, 14. Gal. 1, 2. It is evident also that the Church is a visible society,

2. From the other scriptural appellations which are given to it.

i. It is "a body." "By one spirit we are all baptized in one body." 1 Cor. 12, 13. Of this body, Jesus Christ is the "head" and we all are "members." Eph. 1, 22.

ii. It is a family." Of whom the whole family in Heaven and earth is named." Eph. 3, 15. The family is not only a divinely constituted association of individuals, but a standing symbol of the Church, which St. Paul calls "a great mystery."

iii. It is a "city." "Ye are come to the city of the living God." Heb. 12, 22.

iv. It is a "building"—composed of "living stones." 1 Pet. 2, 5.

v. It is "a vine"—of which all believers are branches." John 15, 1.

All of which symbolical forms of expression convey to our minds the idea of a visible society, well ordered and defined.

3. The Church is expressly spoken of as a society in various places in the New Testament; for example.

i. Our Lord said, "Tell it to the Church," and "If he neglect to hear the Church," &c. Matt. 18, 17.

* The Church of England, and the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, are one, in all things; except as regards connexion with the State. The former is the mother, the latter the daughter.—Ed. C. C.

ii. St. Luke says—"The Lord added to the Church daily." Acts 2, 47. "They assembled themselves with the Church." Acts 11, 26

iii. St. Paul to the Phil.: No Church communicated with me, but you only." Phil. 4, 16.

iv. St. Peter call it "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people." 1 Pet. 2, 9.

v. As a society it is constantly distinguished from "the world." The world is represented as a "society," consisting of all those who live in impenitence and unbelief, and consequently do not obey the call of the gospel, and attach themselves to the "Church." "The whole world lieth in the wicked one." Out of this society God calls his people; they obey the call, and ever after "renounce the world." In the world, men are in a "lost estate;" in the Church they are in a "state of salvation;" In the world they are under "condemnation;" in the Church they are under "grace." In the world they are living "without God and without hope;" in the Church they are begotten to a "living hope." The devil is the "god of this world;" Jesus Christ is the "Lord God" and "Head" of his Church. He is the "Saviour;" the devil is the "destroyer." "Abaddon," "Apollyon." He is the "true light;" the devil is the "prince of darkness." He is the "Good Shepherd;" the devil is a "roaring lion." He is the Heavenly "Physician;" the devil is a "murderer from the beginning." He is "the truth;" the devil is the "father of lies."

vi. Within the Church, the "means of grace" are all visible, which also proves that it is a visible society. There is a visible word, a visible ministry, a visible administration of the sacraments, a visible worship, and a visible government.

II. As a society, it was divinely constituted. Hence it is called the "Church of the living God"—the "Church of Jesus Christ"—the Church which he "loveth" and "cherisheth," and for which "he gave himself."

i. That there is a Church on earth, to which pertain the word, and sacraments, and ministry, and promises, of God. If he had not instituted such a church, men would have no more power to do it than they would have power to make for themselves a bible, if God had not given them one. They have just as much authority to make their own religion as they have to make their own Church.

ii. It is styled "the Church," because its members are "called out of the world," which "calling" is as much the work of God, as was their natural birth. The Church has its "ministry." But no man can ordain himself to the "ministry of Jesus Christ;" neither can he, of himself, ordain another. "How shall they preach except they be sent?"— "No man taketh this honor to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." Heb. 5, 4. The ministers of Jesus Christ are "ambassadors for God." But who ever heard of an "ambassador" who sent himself, or who was sent by any other than the supreme power of the state? Who else could authorize him to transact for the Government he claimed to represent; to negotiate treaties, and attach the sign and seal of authority? Jesus Christ is the "Captain of our salvation;" the Church is an army "of faithful men," fighting "the good fight of faith" under his general command. Who ever heard of an army self-constituted, and its officers self-commissioned, except in a state of rebellion?

Nothing can be plainer, than that the Church neither is nor can be of man. It is not of human institution, but of God.

III. The Church thus divinely constituted, was designed to be the "light of the world." A city set on a hill that could not be hid. Not many cities, but one; under one corporation; its departments similarly governed: each family by itself, all recognizing one "head." Its members were to be the "salt of the