

disappear. Although we be comparatively little among the thousands of Israel, we can discover much reason for compliance with the Apostolic injunction,—“Be ye thankful.”

I. Be ye thankful for our *Apostolic Constitution*, as a Church. I shall not allude to our Dogmatic Theology, to those cardinal doctrines which enter into the composition of our Theological System, not a few of which we share in common with other portions of the great Protestant family. I take for granted that these are understood by most of you. I confine myself especially to our Church polity.

1. We hold by the essential *Unity of the Church*. Whether it be viewed in its Old or New Testament aspects—in its visible or invisible forms, the Church is One. It commenced not at the ascension of her Lord, or on the day of Pentecost. It stretches back to Creation's dawn, and forwards to the “Consummation of all things.” Jesus came not to plant a new tree, but to graff into the old olive, from which the natural branches had been dis severed those which were wild by nature: not to rear a distinct temple, but to break down the middle wall of partition between those [canopied by the same roof, and who were built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner Stone. Whatever then formed the privilege and peculiarity of the Church, before Christ's advent, we hold, was designed to continue in force, unless Christ abrogated or altered it.

The Church (Ecclesia) as the very name imports, is a company of *called ones*,—those called out from the world and consecrated to God,—the professedly godly, whom the Lord hath set apart for Himself,—the people formed for Himself, to show forth His praise, gathered out of the lands from east, west, north and south. Hence, the first Martyr speaks of Israel as “the *Church* that was in *the wilderness*.” Hence we read in the New Testament of the Church in Philadelphia, the Church in Ephesus, and Sardis, and Laodicea, and Thyatira, and the other sections of Asia Minor. Hence the allusions to special individuals, as “Nymphas and the Church which is in his house;” and to certain “tidings” coming “to the ears of the Church which is in Jerusalem;” and God setting some in the Church as office-bearers, whose names are enumerated, (Col. 4 : 15, Acts 11 : 22, 1 Cor. 12 : 28). The Church *visible*, composed of all making a credible profession, together with their offspring,—symbolised by the field in which the tares and wheat grow : or the net into which the good fish and the bad are gathered. The Church *invisible*, composed of all genuine believers, spoken of as “the Church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood.” (Acts