

derness where it yet is.) The prophecy furnishes a direct answer. The true church of christ ought to be invisible as a community for a period of twelve hundred and sixty years, and during all that time a harlot, pretending to be the spouse of Christ, and ought to propagate her idolatries successfully and extensively, throughout the world.

The divisions among protestants have been urged by their adversaries as an argument against them; and the ineffectual efforts of learned and pious men to unite them into one community, have proved stumbling blocks to the faith of some of their friends. But by the prophetic representation, matters ought to be as they are. Had protestants united together into one society, the church of christ would have been visible as a community, which during the currency of twelve hundred and sixty years would flatly contradict the prophecy; but the several protestant churches, having no connection with each other in government and ordinances like the ancient church, they constitute only individual members of the universal church, which as a body politic is invisible now, as it was in the tenth century. While this view should reconcile us to a certain degree of separation among protestants during the currency of the twelve hundred and sixty years, it ought to remove wholly the violence of party spirit and every degree of bitterness and rancour which they have too frequently shewed to each other. A violent party spirit is founded on this principle, that those who possess it are the true church of christ.—Hence they argue that those who separate from them are schismatics or heretics, and therefore ought to be treated as heathens and publicans. But the ground of their reasoning is false; according to the prophecy no particular