

is very frequently used in a more particular or limited sense—signifying the faithful in Christ in any particular locality—as the church of the Thessalonians, 1 Thes. i: 1, “Ordained elders in every church,” Acts xiv: 23, and numerous other passages. The word church occurs about thirty times in the New Testament—church of God seven or eight times—church, plural, twenty times—churches of God three times—churches of Christ, once—making in all more than thirty times. The easy manner in which the word is used, and the frequency of its occurrence, render it almost impossible to be misunderstood by the student of the Bible, and certainly make it unnecessary to offer any further argument that the church consists of the saints, the faithful in Christ Jesus, and that Jesus our Lord, is “head over all to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that fills all in all,” and that through the church might be known, to the principalities and powers in the heavenly regions, the manifold wisdom of God.

In this view of the matter, it will be difficult to harmonise with propriety the remark which is often made in some sections, “that a person can be a christian without belonging to the church, as well as with it.” To belong to Christ is to belong to his church—to belong to the church is to belong to Christ. The wisdom of the present age is very different from this. The church of God is a holy place. It has a holy calling. Its relations, its spirit, its labors are holy. It has no seat for the scorner nor trifier—nor has it any labor for the envious or busybody. It has no garments for the proud or the ambitious. The lovers of God are there. The men of faith are there. Meekness, simplicity, and truth are there. The spirit of God is there. Spirituality and heavenly mindedness are characterized in all that it does.

“Glorious things of thee are spoken,
Zion city of our God
He whose word cannot be broken,
Formed thee for his own abode.”

The church is the antipodes of the institutions of the world. It is natural that *worldly organizations* should care for the world. No one should blame them for it; for they spring of it, and the child should reverence the parent—and the parent love and nurture the child—“the world loves its own.” Each flatters each; and thus each by each is drawn into the arms of each in a time-serving friendship. But alas! “the friendship of the world is death.”

The labors of the church are labors of love internally and externally. “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work,” said the Saviour.