

phenomenon than is supplied by the notion that the Bible teaches that the Church of the New Testament, to which the promises are made, and to which the privileges of the Gospel belong, is an invisible, unorganized association of all true believers; all who are predestinated to eternal life, as the Calvinists put it, or of all who are truly converted, as modern sentiment would prefer expressing it.

Whatever else may be affirmed of it, it is beyond dispute that that thing, to which the name Church is applied in the New Testament, is a visible organized society, with its visible officers and laws and mode of initiation and badges of membership. I go further, and affirm, without the fear of contradiction, that the name Church is never applied to anything that is not a visible organized society. The word *Ecclesia*, which we translate Church, was not a new term invented by our Lord or His Apostles. It was familiar to the ears of His hearers. It was employed in the Septuagint version of the Scriptures, which was in common use at that time, to describe the Jewish nation, the chosen race (see Ps. xxii., 32). It is used by St. Stephen (Acts vii., 38) to describe that people as a whole. St. Paul applies it to them (Heb. ii., 12). Now it will not be pretended that God's ancient people, the Jewish nation, were an invisible unorganized community. Nor will it be contended that they were true believers—truly converted men and women—amongst whom no hypocrites and no reprobates were to be found. Here then is a term in familiar use employed by everyone to describe a visible organized society. Surely if its meaning was now to be wholly changed; if it was to be henceforth employed to describe a different kind of society altogether from that to which it always had been applied; surely, surely, in very mercy, the merciful Lord, to say nothing of His apostles, would have told His hearers plainly of this change and the reasons for it. But not a hint of any such change, intended or accomplished, is to be found anywhere.

But further, the word Church occurs over a hundred times in the New Testament, and there is not one passage in which it occurs which either by direct statement or fair induction can be made to teach Dr. MacLaren's idea of an invisible Church, made up only of true believers, or of those who have been "predestinated to eternal life." There are many passages which altogether exclude any such meaning. The Church at Pergamos had amongst its members those who held the doctrine of Balaam, and others who held the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. Were these true believers, predestinated to eternal life? The Church at Thyatira had the woman Jezebel, who set herself up to seduce God's servants to commit fornication and eat things offered to idols, for a member. Was she truly converted? Was she not manifestly either a hypocrite or a reprobate? The Church at Sardis had many members whose names were going to be blotted out of the Book of Life—(Rev. iii., 5). They were surely not all predestinated to eternal life? The whole of the members of the Church at Laodicea were so lukewarm that they were only fit to be "spued out of the mouth of Christ." Were