

government, so far as these may consist with liberty of conscience and purity of faith.

The Churches of the Reformation required some years to elapse before, forgetting their common origin, they could arrogate to themselves the title, expressed or understood, of "the true Church." Our Presbyterian Church was from the beginning Catholic in spirit, and maintained communion with sister Churches in Europe until the cold days of moderatism, when, by a special Act, the assembly of 1799 cut the Church off from communion with every other Church, and "thereby virtually denied the doctrine of a Church universal, rejected the communion of saints, and disclaimed the brotherly affection infused into all true members of the household of faith by the presence and energy of the Holy Spirit." But at the general Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1842, the year before the disruption, this Act, foreign to the spirit of the Church, was repealed, and a committee was appointed to conduct a correspondence with other branches more or less pure of the true Christian Church in Britain, on the continent of Europe, and in America. This was in accordance with the 4th section of the 25th chapter of the Confession, recognizing particular Churches or denominations in the Church visible.

*This Catholic Church hath been sometimes more, sometimes less, visible. And particular Churches, which are members thereof, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the Gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them.*

Those who deny the existence of the Church invisible, and they also who will not allow the doctrine of the Church visible, are compelled, that they may act consistently, to refuse recognition to, and decline communion with, any other body of professing Christians, however pure in doctrine. It is true that the Congregationalist practice is, in this respect, better than their principle, which is carried out, however, to its full extent by the so-called close-union Baptists, who for co-tenance in their uncharitable exclusiveness can only look to the Roman Catholic, the High Church Episcopalian, and such sects as the Plymouth Brethren. This meeting of extremes on the narrow ground of sectarian bigotry is instructive in considering the doctrine of the Church. We cannot say that all who belong to exclusive sects are of the numerous class that is spoken of by God as "a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day," which says, "Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou." Many of these good people are the victims of a false theory of the Church, which takes complete possession of them, drives them from the communion of their fellow-believers, and makes them, sorely against their will, herd with those who have received the exclusive mark of the beast.

Finally, our doctrine of the Church as visible and invisible completely undermines Papal infallibility and Apostolical succession, with similar flimsy human structures that have been reared upon the Rock by those who have lightly esteemed that true foundation. The Church finds her pedigree as a true Church in connection with no succession, national or ecclesiastical, but in the continued presence of the Holy Spirit, preserving a pure Gospel, converting sinners and keeping the saints in works of faith, labours of love and patience of hope. The translator of the "Annalium Evangelicorum" of Scultetus, in his preface thus quaintly puts the case of the Protestant Church against the Roman Catholic. "But I hear some Papists saying: Thus you tell us where your religion hath been since Luther; but where was it before Luther? I shall add a few words in