

sians. There are also the separate *local churches* of the various cities where the gospel was received, as the Church of Corinth, Ephesus, or Jerusalem. When you come to *provinces* you have *churches*, as those of Galatia, Macedonia, and Judea. Beyond this, there is the happy idea of the church *in the house*. There is no other application of the term in the New Testament to bodies of Christians; however it may be applied, in a secular sense, to a promiscuous assembly.

Hence it follows, that if national churches have no shadow of sanction in the New Testament, as little is there for separate communities of Christians assuming the title of churches in any given city or town. Neither idea has any existence in the New Testament. In the New Testament history, with which the Epistles accord, it is a truth which every one reading it may ascertain for himself that however large the number of believers might be in any given place, and whether actually meeting in one building or in many, they were designated as the Church of God, or God's assembly, in that place. A separate name, or a separate membership, or a separate order did not exist. Separate and rival, or even friendly, churches, in the same town or city, like the separate guilds of a corporation, may be maintained by Erastian arguments, but they have no existence in Scripture.

This is no abstract question. For if the claims of Rome to be the catholic or universal church are justly repelled by Protestants as a baseless and a haughty assumption, on account of her abominations and corruptions; still the idea of an universal church is a true and Scriptural one. But the existence of national and independent churches has served almost to blot out from the minds of Christians that there is such a thing as the Church on earth, to which the members of Christ, by virtue of that membership, and by virtue of that membership alone, belong.

Voluntary associations, and politically constituted churches, are alike opposed to the principles of the New Testament, and necessarily hinder the association and action of believers on the grounds of the Church of God. For it is not by being born within certain geographical limits, nor by voluntary association, but by the necessity of divine grace and life, received from Christ the head, that I am associated with the Church, which is His body. This is undeniable as to that which is vital; because there is but "one body and one Spirit;" and the members of the Church are the members of the body of Christ. There may be a thousand other things wrong, important in their place, because of the bearing they have on the safety and the good of souls; but this is the fundamental error. For certainly Erastianism has no more place nor divine sanction, in regard to the form, and worship, and service of the Church in the New Testament, than it had in relation to the polity, and worship, and service, of Israel in the Old, where it was said, "See thou make all things according to the pattern showed thee in the mount." Albeit the principles of the one and the other are different and opposed. Still, if ritual enactment under the law was necessary to keep the worshipper in the path of duty, and to enable an elect nation to present the divine type of worship in a "worldly sanctuary," no less is the knowledge of sonship necessary, and the apprehension of union with Christ, and the faith of the presence of the Holy Ghost, here on earth, in order to produce a walk, and worship, and affections, suited to the Church, as set in divine grace, and brought into the very light and presence, and the full acceptance, of the living God.

When people are groaning under evils that oppress the conscience, it is small comfort to be told that, "there cannot be a perfect church;" and that "Judas

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