

name of Christ. It is the heritage of the Lord, which he has chosen for himself, and which he enriches with his grace, and waters by his word and Spirit. "It is a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." It is the house of God,—the special residence of his gracious presence, where he holds spiritual communion with his people, where he makes them drink of the river of his pleasures and satisfies them abundantly with the rich provisions of his house. Here God has deposited his holy oracles, instituted the ordinances of his grace, and furnished all things that pertains to life and godliness. Here holy men meet together in God's name; not for secular objects, but for divine worship and hold sweet intercourse and communion with one another. And here God bears testimony to the word of his grace, and renders it effectual for converting sinners, for edifying saints, and training up believers for the heavenly inheritance.

The church of God is a subject with which we are all so familiar that it might seem unnecessary to make it the theme of particular discussion. A keen controversy, however, having lately arisen on the subject, it may be proper to canvass the merits of the question a little.

The church is commonly considered under a two-fold aspect, for distinction is usually made of it into visible and invisible. We hold to this distinction as taught in the Confession of Faith. Rejecting the church-establishment theory which recognizes an intimate union between church and state, making the church co-extensive with the state to a greater or less degree, the Sovereign the head of the church as well of the State, we maintain that "the visible church consisteth of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion, together with their children." And instead of giving every member of the civil community a right to the membership of the church, as a matter of course, we guard admissions with great strictness. Without arrogating to ourselves the prerogatives of the Almighty, and presuming to determine the *spiritual state* of applicants we admit on a profession of faith; and we admit none but on a profession of faith, accompanied with such a measure of religious knowledge and experience as renders the profession credible. .

By the invisible or mystical church, we understand in the language of the same Confession, the whole number of the elect,—all those who have been called by divine grace into the fellowship of the gospel and sanctified in Christ Jesus by the spirit of truth.

This distinction of the church into visible and invisible, is denied by the Romanists and by some Protestants, but on different grounds. Those of the latter who deny the distinction, maintain that the New Testament church is not an outward and visible organization, but a spiritual community, consisting of true believers only. This is the ground on which the Baptist church is founded. Their object is to secure a pure church,—an important object, if attainable. What is the result? Why, the entire exclusion of children from the church; the denial of original sin inherent in the infant, or transmitted; the cutting of the church asunder,—making one-half worldly and carnal, and typical of the other half, which, in their view, is wholly spiritual; and the admission of a slight form of conversion, where there is reason to believe, defeats their main object.