

Hence it appears, that men generally follow that form of faith and doctrine in which they have been educated; and however great allowances may be made for education, prejudice and example, still it is not a sufficient excuse for any one to forbear himself examining into a matter of such vital moment. Error as well as truth may descend from generation to generation; but it must not be allowed from this, that the example of the father does away with the error of the son. To live in separation from the Church of Christ, and plead no better excuse than the example of others, will not justify schism. The word of God, as contained in Holy Writ, is the only sure rule of our faith.—The usages of the Church, as observed in the time of the Apostles, and regularly transmitted by their successors, are the true *practical* application of it.

Amongst various other parts of Scripture treating on the unity of the Church of Christ, there is in the Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians, iv. 3, 4, 5, 6, strong expressions of unity. He mentions *one* body and *one* spirit, *one* hope of our calling, *one* Lord, *one* faith, *one* Baptism, *one* God and Father of all. And from these considerations, he exhorts Christians to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. To set aside the doctrine of Christian unity, or so to construe it as to make it consistent with every sect or denomination, however discordant their views may be, is to do away with the force and meaning of this and parallel texts of Scripture—as it is also the surest means of inducing a spirit of restlessness, which will be subversive of one's establishment in *any* one system of faith. The exercise of Christian liberty is the right of every man—but to unite with any religious denomination that pleases for the moment—to continue as long as that good liking may exist—to embrace another more gratifying to our present views when our former predilection ceases, or after having found some that can satisfy our *enlarged* notions, and then to build up a Church on our own principles—this surely is an excess of liberty, the spirit of which would more naturally apply to the disposition of a wayward child, than to characterize the conduct of the established disciple of Christ. In treating then on Christian unity, it is first of all, to be diligently enquired into whether or not there is delineated in the word of God a Church sufficiently marked to induce an union with her—and it will then follow for each man to reflect how far he is justified either in abstaining or in separating from her communion. The question we admit, is not altogether one of eternal salvation, nevertheless, a very important one, as relating to the visible Church of Christ here on earth, and as such, partaking of all those graces and assistances expressly promised to the Church. Adopting as a ground-work for this essay the Apostle's definition of a Church, as above referred to in the Ephesians, it will be manifest that upon the principles here laid down, no one can be thus united to Christ but through the medium of his Church—and that his Church is *one* is equally manifest from being represented as "*one* body." It is from the consideration of this oneness or unity of Christ's Church, that the necessity of Christian unity results,