

There will always be differences of construction and interpretation upon what is revealed; yet, although there are occasional instances of eccentricity or impulsiveness, which will throw men out of a rational judgment upon such things, there are points on which the great majority of sober and careful inquirers will always agree. So it is the conviction of a vast majority of professed Christians, that a Church, in its outline, constitution, and distinctive visible features, has been organized or sanctioned by our Lord; and the same feeling will generally cause them to admit and appreciate what, under the name of the Church, is constructed and governed according to our Lord's will.

Examining the New Testament, and comparing with it the early Christian writers, we cannot fail to discover that there was originally,—and that there was for several centuries maintained,—a oneness of aspect, faith, and organization in the Church; every where there was one obvious and recognized frame-work of that holy society. Except in a few cases, which were always strongly condemned by the general voice of believers, there was no such thing as departure or deviation from the rules, and government, and order which then characterized “the Church of the living God.”

It is very evident that the believers on the name of Christ were not to stand isolated and separate, each to pursue his own way and will; but they must be part and parcel of that organized association. Their admission into this society, by the Lord's appointed way, was to be the test of their union with Him. It was the established means,—and, as far as we know, the only means,—by which they were to obtain the privileges and benefits conferred by His death.

Some, we are aware, will argue differently; and very frequently their repugnance to joining such an institution arises from the dislike of restraint,—they have an aversion to be trammelled and fettered by rules. They may fancy, too, that by avoiding the positive profession which union