

Apollos, and Cephas, spoke the same things, and were perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment. Some errors indeed had been introduced by *false* teachers, and some sinful practices—retained by some of the converts from their former superstitions—were not yet laid aside;—but none of these seem to have been causes of division in the Corinthian church. These causes were chiefly to be found in their unreasonable preference for particular teachers and not in diversity of doctrine. In this respect the divisions which existed in the church *then*, differ from the divisions which exist in the church *now*; the former arose from diversity of gifts in the teachers; the latter, at least in the great branches of the Christian family, arise from various causes quite independent of the personal qualifications of particular religious teachers. Let us illustrate this subject.

The church has long been divided on the question of its government. Dispute on this point could not arise in the apostolic age—for the company of the faithful would naturally and implicitly submit to those men who by miraculous signs gave certain evidence that they bore the commission of heaven. Accordingly we never find any disunion among the apostles themselves on the ground of superiority or precedence. Peter never pretended to be the superior of Paul, nor did Paul assume any authority over John. Guided by the same spirit they were perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment—and each seems to have labored in his own sphere, and to have ruled with apostolic authority over those he was instrumental in converting to the faith. Nor does it appear that their authority was ever disputed by the company of believers who regarded them

as the inspired ambassadors of Christ, as teachers and parents—as overseers in the house of God whom it were impiety to disobey. While the church, therefore, remained under such authority there were no divisions on the question of its government.

But when these divinely commissioned men rested from their labors, they were succeeded by pastors who did not enter into their full authority, because they were not, like the apostles, possessed of inspiration and infallibility. Their successors in preaching and government—for they had no successors as apostles—were not inspired—were not infallible—and consequently they could not pretend to assert the same authority either as instructors or rulers. When they governed, or enacted any discipline, they were bound to appeal to apostolic practice or precept: if they were not borne out by either, their discipline rested only on human authority, and could not be of imperative obligation. It seems that there must have arisen at a very early period of the church, a considerable diversity in the mode of its government. Had the apostles laid down a fixed standard—had they been as explicit on the order of discipline as they are upon the subject of doctrine—this diversity could scarcely have arisen. But it must be manifest that there is little very positive or explicit on this subject in the New Testament scriptures. And it is not improbable that the apostolic practice itself might be varied according to circumstances. We need not be surprised therefore that some diversity of opinion and practice should very soon prevail on a subject on which no clear positive rule had been laid down by inspired authority; and that in proportion as men departed from the Christian temper of