

they truly converted people? The Church at Corinth had in it one member who was guilty of the fondest incest; many members who showed that they "were carnal and walked as men by the parties and divisions that had sprung up among them"; many members who were utter sceptics, denying the fundamental doctrine of the Resurrection; many who were guilty of gross profanation of the Lord's Supper. The Church in Galatia had been bewitched, and had all but apostatized. Were all these members of these Churches, in spite of the Apostle's condemnation, "true believers, who were truly obeying our Lord Jesus Christ?" Again, if the Church be invisible how can anyone obey the Lord's command, "Tell it unto the Church?" Where could we find an invisible Church, or how could the offending brother hear or refuse to hear the Church if the Church could nowhere be found to hear the complaint or speak to the offender? How, again, could the discipline commanded be exercised? How could you cast a man out of an invisible Church? If he were a good man you could not cast him out of your invisible Church, for all good men are members of it by virtue of their goodness. And if he were a bad man you could not cast him out, for he did not belong to this invisible Church, and never could according to the professor's teaching. How, again, could a great persecution come upon an invisible Church (Acts viii., 1)? How could the persecutor find it? Or how could the Apostles have assembled with an invisible Church? How could they have ordained elders in every church if the Church was invisible (Acts xii., 27)? Or how could they be brought on their way by an invisible Church? Or how could those at Rome salute an invisible Church? Or how could Saul make havoc of an invisible Church? Or Diotrophes cast men out of an invisible Church? or Timothy take care of an invisible Church? Were the Churches to which St. Paul wrote his Epistles at Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Colosse, Philippi, and Thessalonica invisible Churches? How, again, could the members of an invisible Church "obey them that have the rule over them?" Who would they be? where could they find them?

There is no sin more sternly denounced in Holy Scripture than the sin of schism, the dividing the body of Christ. But if the Church be invisible, how could parties be formed in it or schisms from it? You might set up as many sects or parties as you liked, and yet you could not, by any act of visible, external separation, divide an invisible community, made up of true spiritual members; and so it would follow not only that many parts of Holy Scripture were written in vain, but are positively chargeable with the fraud of trying to confound a visible society with the one true invisible Church. But no. This modern notion that the Church which Christ said He would build upon this rock, and which St. Paul tells us He did build upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the head corner-stone, is an invisible thing, is a manifest fiction invented to hide from men's eyes the enormous guilt of the sin of schism with which the Christian world is afflicted and humiliated to-day, and which Holy Scripture everywhere so sternly condemns.