

On Dissent Without Reason in Conscience

by J.H. Newman

Dissent from the Church is a sin, and Christians have a duty to submit themselves to the established order and manner in the Church.

Scripture: Matthew 18:17

Topics: "Church Unity", "Christian Obedience"

Description

J.H. Newman preaches on the importance of unity within the Church, emphasizing that the Visible Church encompasses both the true universal Church, known as the mystical and invisible Church. He addresses the common misconception that there is little difference between Churchmen and Dissenters, highlighting the sinfulness of Dissent and the duty to submit to established authorities in religious matters. Newman provides a detailed argument based on Christian duty, obedience, unity, and charity, urging individuals to carefully consider the implications of separating from the Church without valid reasons.

Transcript

As one mass doth contain the good ore and base alloy; as one floor the corn and the chaff; as one field the wheat and the tares as one net the choice fish and the refuse; as one fold the sheep and the goats as one tree the living and dry branches: so doth the Visible Church enfold the true universal. Church, called the Church mystical and invisible. And for this reason, and because presumptively every member of the Visible Church doth pass for a member of the invisible, (the time of distinction and separation being not yet come,) because this Visible Church, in its profession of truth, in its sacrifices of devotion, in its practice of service and duty to GOD, doth communicate with the invisible, therefore commonly the titles and attributes of one are imparted to the other." --Altered from Barrow on the Unity of the Church, vol. vii. p. 631.

It is often asked, "Why should not a man attend both the Church and Meeting, if he derives benefit from both?" And again, "Why should not a man be a Dissenter, though he have nothing particular to object against the Church, if he is not violent in his opposition to the Church? The following remarks, in answer to these questions, were written by a clergyman for the use of his parishioners.

Many of you have made remarks to me on the subject of Dissent, when I have been visiting you in your cottages; and the substance of these remarks has apparently been, that it was of, very little importance, whether a man belonged to the Church, or dissented from it, because the difference, is after all: but small between Churchmen and Dissenters. You have thus spoken (as it would seem) sometimes with a view of drawing out my opinions, sometimes as a sort of defence or apology for your own. Sometimes in order to

invite an argument. I have purposely in my answers abstained from entering into the question, and confined myself to saying simply, that I did not think as you did upon the matter. It would by no means have fallen in with the purpose for which I visited you on first coming to the parish, to have entered into any lengthened reasonings. My object in calling was to express my good-will towards you, and therefore to seek our points of agreement, and not our points of difference.

At the same time you are not to suppose that I at all wish to conceal my sentiments, and it is because some of you may perhaps have an erroneous impression of what my opinion is on this subject that I now write this. My observations will be as short, as I can well make them. I shall avoid as much as possible any thing like controversy, or any expressions of opinion as to the relative merits of this or that form of dissent, or any discussion of the particular Articles of Faith (so far as there may be said to be such at all) among the several persuasions around us. Bear in mind, my object is, to show you that Dissent is a sin.

But before I proceed further I must make two observations, which I wish you to keep in mind, while you read these remarks, because they will remove some difficulty, which you might otherwise feel in what follows.

1. I allow there may be conscientious Dissenters, nay, I hope in charity, there are many;—but by a conscientious Dissenter I mean a man who separates himself from the Church, because he thinks he finds something in her doctrines or discipline so far contrary to scriptural truth and the precepts, of the Gospel, that by adhering, to: her, he would be putting an obstacle in the way of his own salvation. Other persons may think themselves conscientious Dissenters who do not go nearly so far in their condemnation of the doctrines or practice of the Church: nay, so far from it, that they would defend their Dissent upon the ground that there is no material difference between the system and teaching in the one, and the system and teaching in the other. But such men I do not call conscientious Dissenters, but careless or weak-minded persons, who cannot have thought much or seriously upon the subject, and who can hardly have read with attention what is to be found in the New Testament respecting the sin of schism, or on the unity of the Church, and the duty of obedience to it. Indeed a man out to consider very seriously what account he can give of his faith, who is far both Churchman and Dissenter, and so far disposed towards both, as to attend indiscriminately one or other place of worship; who also could give very little better explanation of the difference between one and the other, than a statement of the difference in the public services of each, and other particular matters of form, and of external observance. Such a person can neither be a true Churchman nor a conscientious Dissenter. He cannot be a true Churchman, for if he was he would not attending a Dissenting place of worship. For Dissent from the Church must imply a condemnation of something or other, be it of more or less importance, in the doctrines or discipline of the Established Church. and whoever attends service in a Meeting-house, when he has the opportunity of going to the Parish Church, does, by so doing, give his silent approbation to the principle of Dissent, and shows that at least he does not disapprove of the opinions of the particular body to whose Meeting he goes. He cannot be, on the other hand, a conscientious Dissenter, or he would not frequent the Church, i.e. a place of worship, which is supported by a system, which he considers one of injustice, and which excludes and condemns that to which he himself belongs; to say nothing about the probability of his hearing something, which, though not directly levelled against Dissent, still is in spirit a reproof and protest against it.

When I say that Dissent is a sin, I by no means thereby imply, that for that reason every Dissenter is at once and necessarily a sinner. To say that a particular thing is a sin, is a very different thing from saying that every one who does it is a sinner. It will be as well to make this quite clear to you, and therefore I will

give you some cases in which you would, without hesitation, make the same remark that I have done.Â--To kill a fellow-creature is undoubtedly a crime; but you would not say that the person who killed another by accident, or in defence of his country, or of his own life, or by command of lawful authorities, was criminal. There are, indeed, few deeds which are in a general way sins, which may not be committed under such circumstances as to rescue the person who did them from being on that account a sinner. There was once a nation which did not think thieving wrong: there is a nation which does not consider a parent's destroying a child, when too poor to maintain it, as a sin: and there is a class or sect in another nation who hold the same opinion as to the lives of their parents, when too old to be serviceable to themselves. You see from these illustrations that the degree of criminality attaching to a person for his actions, depends very much on the extent of knowledge he has of the nature of the act, his education, and various other circumstances. It is very difficult to weigh these exactly in estimating how far any particular person himself does wrong while he is committing a wrong act: GOD alone can see the heart; and, therefore, it is better to speak without immediate reference to persons, and only as to the character of the opinion or action under consideration.

With these explanations, first, on the score of conscience causing it; next, of circumstances varying the degree of criminality in different persons; I repeat, Dissent is a sin, which I now go on to prove to you.

Persons dissent from the Church on account of some difference or other, this is plain; and, from what I have already said, it is also plain that I do not intend to say any thing in what follows concerning the greater differences which cause Dissent, i.e. differences which are founded upon a different interpretation of Scripture. For when a man thinks the Church unscriptural, he has a good reason for leaving it, and is (what I have called above) a conscientious Dissenter; though at the same time I am bound to say, I think his conscience a very erroneous one, which leads him to consider the Church unscriptural; and while I allow him to be conscientious in one sense of the word, yet I also think him heretical,Â--just as those men who (as our LORD foretold) thought, when they persecuted the Apostles, "they did GOD service," were wrong, not in that they obeyed their conscience, but because they had not a more enlightened conscience. "The light that is in" a merely conscientious Dissenter is (what CHRIST has called) "darkness." I say this before passing on to consider (as I mean to do) the other kind of Dissenters, those, viz. who dissent for some lesser difference, merely lest you should suppose that I consider a person absolved from all guilt, on the ground of his being conscientious; for as a good conscience is a great treasure, so a dark conscience is like the blind leading the blind. Now then let me address myself to that larger number of persons who have no material objection against the Church as to its doctrines or discipline, and who do not think that a Dissenter will be saved a bit more than a Churchman; who, indeed, are so far from condemning the Church, that they always feel rather disposed, when acknowledging their Dissent, to make a sort of apology or explanation for their leaving the Church, as e.g. that "it was so far to go to Church," or that "their health was weak," or "no good sittings were to be had," or that "they had an objection to the clergyman of the parish," or that "they were more edified by the service at Meeting, as more spiritual," or such reasons. I shall begin by placing before you some arguments, which indirectly support my assertion concerning the sinfulness of Dissent.

(1.) Christians are required to unite in serving GOD in mutual charity and hearty concord. Hence such direction as these from the Apostles to different Churches, viz. that they should endeavour to keep "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," that they should be "like-minded, having the same love," being "of one accord, of one mind, standing fast in one Spirit with one mind," that they should "walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing," that "with one mind and one mouth they should glorify GOD, the Father of

our LORD JESUS CHRIST," that they should "all speak the same thing," that there should be "no divisions among them," but that they be "perfectly joined together in the same mind in the same judgment."

As to the construction which some persons put on such passages, viz. by making them to refer to an unity in the spiritual sense, to a mystical union of the faithful all over the world, in the invisible Church of CHRIST, it is clearly inadmissible. For as a matter of reason, what can be the use of such strong and repeated exhortations to an union, whose only external sign is a profession of charitable indifference to all diversities of religious opinion, and whose principle bond of union, is a secret internal feeling, as to which no one can exactly judge his neighbour? And yet in the New Testament, direction are given concerning such divisions, as respecting a thing, of which every Christian can judge. And further, as a matter of fact, the Church or body, in which unity is preserved, is spoken of as a visible body, Vid Matt. xvi. 18; xviii. 17. 1 Tim. iii. 15. 1 Cor. xii. Eph. iv. 4--12.

(2.) Obedience to superiors is enjoined. This command seems to me, to give a double sanction to the legitimately appointed authorities of the Church. First, An authority indirectly, inasmuch as duty to the State requires of us obedience to all those who have the sanction of its authority for their dignities, provided always, obedience to them does not involve some sacrifice of principle, so as to be against our consciences. Hence, since the time that Church and State have been united, it becomes the duty of a good subject to pay reverence and obedience to the appointed ministers of religion, upon civil as well as upon religious grounds. Secondly, An authority directly, because obedience to spiritual superiors is separately enjoined. E. g. "Likewise ye younger; submit yourselves to the elder," 1 Pet. v. 5. (you will see from the first and second verses, that the elders mean spiritual superiors, who are set over you.) And again, "Submit yourselves unto such, and to every one, that helpeth with us, and laboureth." (1 Cor. xvi. 16.) "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account." (Heb. xiii. 17.) Again, "We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the LORD, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their works' sake." (1 Thess. v. 12, 13.)

(3.) It is also a command to Christians, not to give a brother cause of sorrow and offence. Now any separation must do that. The question therefore is, whether the grounds for it are such as to compel us, from regard to our own souls, and even out of Christian charity to him, to separate from communion with the body to which he belongs, that we may thereby make him acquainted with the danger there is to his eternal salvation in remaining in a body, from which we feel obliged, for conscience sake, to come out. If we do not think we endanger our salvation by continuing in the Church, we are not justified for mere matters of opinion, and things, which we do not hold to be essentials of religion, to cast a reproach upon the body, from which we remove as from a thing unclean, and to give pain, doubts, and cause of dissensions, by thus withdrawing.

I proceed next to some direct arguments in support of the assertion, that separation, as such, and when not on account of some fundamental doctrine, is a sin.

1st. Hear what Scripture tells us should be our conduct towards those who cause divisions, and then consider, whether such persons are brought before us as exercising a proper liberty of choice.

"We command you in the name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother, that walketh disorderly and not after the tradition which ye have received of us" (2 Thess. iii. 6.)

"If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, nor bid him GOD speed." (2 John x.)

"These are they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit." (Jude 19.)

"I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them." (Rom. xvi. 17.)

"If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even to the words of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil-surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself." (1 Tim. vi. 3-5.)

2dly. Consider the manner they are represented in, who cause disunion in the Church. The terms are, indeed, so harsh to modern (so called) liberal notions, that one feels sure of incurring the reproach of being a bigot for venturing thus to apply what we read in Scripture; and the general view respecting these passages probably is, that the time of their application is quite gone by, and that they have long since become a dead letter. And yet, reflect, these terms are not used of persons, who were infidels, or heathens, or of those who corrupted the main doctrines of Christianity. St. Paul blames the Corinthians, because they expressed a preference for one teacher above another, and though they all taught the same thing, still he says of such a difference, "that there are contentions among you," and speaks of it as an evidence of their "carnal mind." (1 Cor. iii. 3.)

3rdly. There are many passages in the Epistles, in which the ways, dispositions, and practices of false teachers are described, concerning which the learned differ much, and determine differently the sort of opinions condemned in them. Allowing, however, what weight is fair to this circumstance, yet after all look at them attentively with a view of finding whether they will give you any light for the guidance of your conduct in this matter; and, while you consider them, bear the following remarks in mind:--

1. That which is condemned in these persons is either their professing false doctrine, or their making disorder, disturbance and disunion in the Church. If you think any of them apply to the second, then such passages apply to my argument here, because they go to prove, that making a separation and disputes in the Church is wrong.

2. You will learn from some of them that a person may think himself quite sincere in leaving the Church, and, yet his own heart may have deceived him, thought it cannot deceive GOD, who will call him to account hereafter. 2 Tim. iii. 13. 2 Thess. ii. 11.

3. You will see that heresy and schism are placed along with bas passions, and bad actions, and vicious dispositions, as if in some way connected with them, and as if we may therefore be called to give account for these opinions, just as much as for those actions, and passions, and dispositions of mind. 1 Tim. vi. 3. 20.; i. 3, 4. 2 Tim. iv. 3.; iii. 13. Gal. i. 9. 2 Pet. ii. 18. 10.; iii. 16. Tit. i. 10.; iii. 10, 11. 2 Cor. xi. 13. 15. Acts xx. 20. Matt. vii. 15. 2 Thess. iii. 6. 11. 2 John 9. Eph. iv. 14. Jude 16. Phil. i. 15, 16.

4thly. Consider the case of Korah in the Old Testament. He was a priest of the second order, and, with other Levites, withdrew his obedience from the High Priest. There was no matter of doctrine or worship in dispute between them and Aaron, nor any other dispute than that of Church government. And yet how

terrible was his punishment. In his case we cannot evade the application to the Gospel times, because St. Jude makes it for us, speaking of those who "perish in the gainsaying of Core." Jude 11.

5thly. When the Jews fell into wickedness and idolatry, priests as well as people, and GOD sent prophets to reprove them, yet none of these holy prophets did separate from communion with the wicked priests, and set up another priesthood in opposition to them. They did not think it lawful, how holy soever they were, to intrude themselves into the priesthood, as they had not been lawfully called and appointed.

These two cases go very strongly to prove that there is a duty to submit ourselves, for conscience's sake, to the established order and manner in the Church, so long as the church enjoins nothing which plainly contradicts the revealed will of GOD, and to perform which would therefore do violence to our sense of right.

6thly. Consider further, the ground upon which our SAVIOUR ordered the authority of the Scribes and Pharisees to be respected, viz. because they sat in Moses's seat (Matt. xxiii. 2.); i.e. because they were the lawfully appointed and regularly ordained ministers of the established religion. Moreover, throughout the acts of the Apostles, where we are to look for the use and gradual formation of a system of Church government, in proportion as the converts become more numerous, and more widely scattered in different countries, we may trace a principle of union and of subordination throughout the various Churches and Assemblies of believers. Care too was taken for the continuance of this union and this subordination, both in the manner of appointing teachers then, and in providing for their similar appointment for the time to come: and this manner of providing a due supply of fit persons for the ministry has been observed not only during the age of the Apostles, and their immediate successors, but it may be said through the first fifteen centuries after the establishment of Christianity.

7thly, Turn to the solemn prayers of our SAVIOUR in the 17th chapter of St. John. "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given to me, that they may be one, as we are;" and again, the same prayer, "neither pray I for these alone, but for them also, which shall believe on Me, through their word, that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us." . . . Would it not be in direct opposition to the spirit and letter of this prayer to justify every individual Christian in claiming the right of withdrawing himself from communion with the Church upon every slight difference of opinion? As if Christianity required of us no surrender whatever of the private judgment, and as if it were never right for a Christian silently to acquiesce in existing usages, or new ordinances, in things indifferent, when commanded by lawful authority, unless he was convinced of the benefit and propriety of them, which would, in fact, be to make every individual Christian a law unto himself in all things; or, to adapt our language to the day, as if it were never required to assent in religious matters in the same way as in civil matters, i.e. without being convinced of the advisableness or benefit of the thing enjoined, but merely because, on the one hand, lawful authority orders it, and, on the other, we see no danger to our souls in obeying it.

8thly. CHRIST hath given an authority to the Church, and therefore there is but one thing which can justify us in going against its authority, and that, a firm conviction, that by doing what the Church orders, we should transgress some still more evident and higher command of GOD: as, e.g. when the Church of Rome pronounced it lawful to take away the lives of excommunicated princes. and is not separating from the Church transgressing its authority?

If any one ask, where is this authority spoken of in Scripture? let him consider the following texts.

"He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth Him that sent me." (Luke x. 16.)

"If he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." (Matt. xviii. 17.)

"Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." (Matt. xviii. 18.)

"Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." (John xx. 23.)

"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. xxviii. 20)

9thly. CHRIST hath appointed the Church as the only way to eternal life. We read at the first, that the LORD added daily to the Church such as should be saved; and what was then done daily, hath been done since continually. CHRIST never appointed two ways to heaven; nor did He build a Church to save some, and make another institution for other men's salvation. "There is no other name under heaven given unto men, whereby we must be saved, but the name of JESUS:" and that is no otherwise given under heaven, than in the Church.

Here, then, I finish my series of arguments. Not that there are not many others, which might be brought forward, to show that Dissent is wrong; but I prefer confining my remarks to those which have something in common with one another. The principles upon which all the reasonings here given are in some sort founded, are, 1. the Christian duty of obedience; 2. of preserving unity; 3. of avoiding, in all cases where we can, with a safe conscience, any giving occasion of offence, or pain, or perplexity, to our Christian brethren:--in other words, the duty of having an eye always to CHRISTIAN CHARITY, i.e. brotherly love, in our way of performing our duties, especially those about the limits of which we are not quite sure.

The sum of the matter as here set before you is this. If a man's separation from the Church be upon grounds which he really believes to be of vital importance, I have nothing to do with him. He acts from conscientious motives, and cannot remain in communion with a Church, which teaches what he holds to be false doctrines. "To his own Master he standeth or falleth;" and it is not for me to judge how he has come to this conclusion. I can, however, fully understand, that so long as he holds such an opinion about our Church, he cannot have any thing to do with it, but must come out from it. But if I see a man attending the Church occasionally, as if he thought there was no positive harm in what is taught there, then I say, that man has not done rightly in becoming a Dissenter, because I gather from Scripture that it is a duty to submit to established authorities in religious matters, just as in political and civil matters, so long as there is no vital and essential difference between his own articles of faith, and those which the established Church maintains. He ought to submit in all things indifferent for conscience's sake. And his only sound and sufficient defence for separating from the Church, is a belief, that he cannot be saved in it on account of its holding false doctrine. If he cannot say this, he has no sufficient reason for thus "rending CHRIST'S body," by removing himself out of the Church, and for giving an example to others to set up some new sect for themselves upon any trifling ground of difference.

I will add only one more remark in conclusion, which is this. You read in the New Testament of great and important promises made to the Church, whatever that Church be: you read also of many very strong and sharp rebukes given to those, who caused dissensions and disputes in the Church, during the time of the Apostles: you read also of the heavy condemnation, which will come upon those who have been partakers

in these sins; and also you know the warnings of our SAVIOUR and of the apostles, that in the latter days, the danger and subtilty of these errors and heresies would increase, so as to deceive (if it were possible) even the elect; and, lastly, you know, that even though persons think they are conscientiously obliged to make a schism, still they may be condemned for this very false conviction of their deceitful hearts. Now, since all this is the case, would it not be prudent for a single man, who thinks of becoming a Dissenter, to consider seriously where he is most likely to come within the terms of these promises, and where he is least likely to be liable to the threats and denunciations above alluded to? Would it not be well to reason with himself somewhat on this wise: "The Church may not mean the Church, as some people understand it, who suppose that Dissenters are left out of it; but still as I never heard any one say, that the Dissenters were the only true Church, and that the Established Church was shut out of the promises, because she was no longer part of the true Church, surely I am more safe, more likely to come in for a share of these blessings, if, while in other things I strive to do my duty without troubling myself to decide things, which in truth are too hard for me, I continue a member of the Established Church. By so doing, I follow the example of my forefathers, of my country, of holy martyrs before me, and rest my faith on the authority of those, who are, by virtue of their office, successors of the Apostles; whereas, in the other case, I must, on my own judgment, set aside all this weight of authority, and do that, which is as much as to say, that till within the last three hundred years the whole world has been in darkness, and that I can see clearer than all those great, and good, and pious, and learned persons, who have lived and died before in the faith." Surely it is the safer course to remain stedfastly in the Church, without halting between opinions; there is more chance of your being right there.

NOTE.

P.S. In order that you may know whom you ought to look upon as your proper spiritual guides and governors, I lay before you the description given of them by the famous Dr. Isaac Barrow. "Those, I say, then, who constantly do profess and teach that sound and wholesome doctrine, which was delivered by our LORD and his Apostles in a word and writing, was received by their disciples in the primitive Churches, was transmitted and confirmed by general tradition, was sealed by the blood of the blessed martyrs, and propagated by the labours of the holy fathers; the which also manifestly recommendeth and promoteth true reverence and piety towards GOD, justice and charity towards men, order and quiet in human societies, purity and sobriety in each man's private conversation.

"Those who celebrate the true worship of GOD, and administer the holy mysteries of our religion, in a serious, grace, and decent manner, purely and without any notorious corruption, either by hurtful error, or superstitious foppery, or irreverent rudeness, to the advancement of GOD'S honour, and edification of the participants in virtue and piety.

"Those who derive their authority by a continued succession from the Apostles, who are called unto and constituted in their office in a regular and peaceable way, agreeable to the institution of GOD, and the constant practice of His Church, according to rules approved in the best and purest ages; who are prepared to the exercise of their functions by the best education, that ordinarily can be provided under sober discipline, in the schools of the prophets; who thence, by competent endowments of mind and useful furniture of good learning, acquired by painful study, become qualified to guide and instruct the people; who, after previous examination of their abilities, and probable testimonies concerning their manners (with regard to the qualifications of incorrupt doctrine and sober conversation, prescribed by the apostles), are adjudged for the office; who, also, in a pious, grave, solemn manner, with invocation of GOD'S blessing, by laying on of the hands of the presbytery, are admitted thereunto.

"Those whose practice in guiding and governing the people of GOD, is not managed by arbitrary, uncertain, fickle, private fancies or humours, but regulated by standing laws; framed (according to general directions extant in holy Scripture) by pious and wise persons, with mature advice, in accommodation to the seasons and circumstances of things, for common edification, order, and peace.

"Those, who, by virtue of their good principles, in their dispositions and demeanour appear sober, orderly, peaceable, yielding meek submission to government, tendering the Church's peace, upholding the communion of the saints, abstaining from all schismatical, turbulent, and factious practices.

"Those, also, who are acknowledged by the laws of our country, an obligation to obey whom is part of that human constitution unto which we are in all things (not evidently repugnant to GOD'S law) indispensably bound to submit; whom our Sovereign, GOD'S vicegerent, and the nursing father of His Church among us, (unto whom in all things high respect, in all lawful things entire obedience, is due,) doth command and encourage us to obey.

"Those, I say, to whom this character plainly doth agree, we may reasonably be assured, that they are our true guides and governors, whom we are obliged to follow and obey; for what better assurance can we in reason desire? what more proper marks can be assigned to discern them by? what methods of constituting such needful officers can be settled more answerable to their design and use? how can it be evil or unsafe to follow guides authorized by such warrants, conformed to such patterns, endowed with such dispositions, acting by such principles and rules? Can we mistake or miscarry, by complying with the great body of GOD'S Church through all ages, and particularly with those great lights of the primitive Church, who, by the excellency of their knowledge, and the integrity of their virtue, have so illustrated our holy religion?"

(Barrow, Sermon. LVI. p. 284--287. vol. iii.)

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