

So the Presbyterian speaks of John Calvin as the founder of his Church; and the Methodist, of John Wesley as the founder of his; and the Reformed Episcopalian, of George Cummins as the founder of *his* church. So we speak of Williams and Brown, of Edward Irving and William Ellery Channing, of Hosea Ballou and Alexander Campbell, as founders of their "churches" or denominations.

Now, what is involved in this? If John Calvin or George Cummins could found a Church, then, reader, you or I. or any man living, (or for that matter, any woman) could as well. It would be a "church," and as good as there is going, at least so far as the right of foundation goes. It would not signify whether it was three hundred years old, or ten years, or one year, or one hour old, for that matter; or whether it had a million members, or two, or one. It would be none the less a "church," on that account. Indeed, a man may be his own church and he may be the only member of it. Manifestly, rights that inhere in one man do in another. If church-making be an inherent right, then I am as free to exercise such rights as any one else; and I may do so this very day, before the sun goes down. This is a legitimate inference, if we admit that men have any such right. But we do not admit it. To admit that they have, would be to admit that which in its results would end in the utter disintegration of Christianity. It ends in *Individualism*. This is what it has already ended in for thousands of Americans to-day. Go to hundreds of those around you, and ask any one of them what church he belongs to, and he will very likely say, "To

none; I have my own opinions; they suit me; I do not care whether they suit other men or not." That is, they have carried out the common notion to its logical results; and for them it has ended in individualism. It is a principle which has in it, for Christianity, the seeds of utter disintegration. We Churchmen do not admit it. As it seems to us, it involves the destruction of all that we hold most dear. Not admitting it, we must act accordingly. We must belong to a Church which denies it, and plants itself on the very opposite of it, namely, that Christ's Church is of God, and not of man; that it was founded by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and not by any follower of His, however, devout or good or well-meaning he may have been. We Churchmen, therefore, do not and cannot look to any individual Christian as the founder of the Church, nor to the fallible expounder of any system or polity or theology. We do not admit the right of any man or of any set of men, or of any School or party, to define for us the Faith which we confess. We go back to our Divine Lord Himself, and to that Mount of the Ascension where with uplifted hands He said: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Here, then, we find the great charter of the visible Kingdom of God set up among men. We find it in the great Apostolic Commis-