

or widespread report ; but whose chief concern is with the *power itself*, in the spirit of man, and the Spirit of God, and with both in their mutual relations. If the churches we represent have any "peculiarity" among other bodies of ostensible Christians, it is their reiterated insistence upon placing the emphasis of the new dispensation upon their life and order. And, in this, they hold that they find exemplars in the New Testament. The first characteristic, then, of a Congregational Church, is the first characteristic of the New Testament churches—*Spirituality*. Here let us not be considered arrogant, nor let us be misunderstood. In what is said we are not to be taken as either denying or suspecting the spirituality of other churches, or rather of other conceptions of the church. Nor by this emphatic claim for spirituality are we to be taken as insisting that churches are, or ought to be, spiritual gatherings only, admitting of nothing in their life and service that is outward, symbolic, or corporeal. As we understand a church of the New Testament, its economy is the reverse of the economy of the old dispensation. *That* was characteristically carnal, "standing in meats and drinks and divers washings and carnal ordinances *imposed* upon the worshippers ;" but *this* is characteristically spiritual, standing in the offering of the heart, and the consequent obedience of the life, with such devotion of the whole man as love may *evoke from* the worshippers. But necessarily, so long as we are flesh and blood, the offerings of the spirit and the instruction of the spirit must in part be by what can be touched and tasted, seen and handled. While maintaining the predominance of the spirit, we by no means claim exemption from such things of the flesh as may minister to us of the Spirit. But their fewness and their simplicity are both grounded upon the evident preponderance of the glory of God over the glory of man in the things of the new dispensation.

Another feature of the New Testament we profess to make much of in our church life is *Catholicity*. We neither have nor hold to national establishments as political or semi-political aids to the Gospel ; we have no churches of national name even, nor of race, caste, sex, colour or any other differing condition of mankind ; no denominational creed imposed alike upon all believers ; no stereotyped forms of worship nor set ritual for all times and cultures alike ; no particular attachment to worship "in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem"—far less at Rome—as of special avail in honouring the Father. Nor do we separate from our fellow-believers because of differences in forms of Christian service, nor varieties in non-essential beliefs—holding with all who hold the Head, and parting only with those professing Christians who tell us they cannot follow Christ with us, nor with the great company of Christians who keep close by Him as the only Saviour of the world.

And this hastens me on to notice what is in fine harmony with their *Spirituality* and *Catholicity*, namely, the *Simplicity* of the New Testament churches. They are constituted under this simple charter, "Where two or three are together in My name [or for My name] there am I." Christ is their hope of glory—Christ, and not the coveted "powers that be." The glory of the terrestrial is one thing, it is the glory of studied magnificence ; of power over the external, of laboured and complicated effort to gain the eyes, the ears, the nerves of men to a confession of its mighty sway. The glory of the celestial, of the spiritually celestial, is another thing. It is simply free from observation ; it has no machinery, ecclesiastical or other ; it is managed without heat or bluster, or complicated subtlety in any department of its life. Its glory is that of love, of principle, of character ; it is the glory of heaven, the glory of God.

This is the New Testament's ideal of a church ; and to some extent its real church as in Philippi and Smyrna and Pergamos, Thyatira, Ephesus, Antioch and Jerusalem. And doubtless in the main to this every church bears a testimony, and by more or less direct effort seeks to attain it. However far short our churches may come of attaining it—seeking it as we believe by the most direct way—they have no intention of lowering the ideal, even while confessing their non-attainment of it as the real. Granting that they are under the reproach of the