

be found the true *jus divinum* which binds together in one all in Christ. Anglicanism makes "orders," the historic Episcopate, its manifestation of unity; Presbyterianism, its creed; Methodism, its class meeting and experience; I see none of these thus laid down in the New Testament. The ideal of Independency, Congregationalism, is free realization of abiding union in Christ Jesus. There must be Christianity before there is a Christian Church, and Christianity does not tie up communities in metaphysical creeds or social clubs. Creeds and politics may become necessary, will be evolved, but neither can form the permanent basis of Christian fellowship, which must be essentially Christian. This is no new doctrine, it was the root principle of Robert Brown, who, finding in the parish system of the State Church of his day little to commend it to a spiritually hungry soul, judged that the Kingdom of God was made up "of the worthiest, be they never so few." And his spiritual father, Mr. Greenham, has left a record, "Many meddle and stir much about a new church government, who are senseless and barren on the doctrine of new birth." This was the kernel of the system which the early Independents sought for. The husk was often tough and bitter, but the nut was sweet and full of sap. Here, too, we find the true and only *jus divinum* of New Testament ecclesiasticism; Jesus Christ indwelling, quickening, and the form of church life which can for the time being best manifest to a needy world this new life, is the church which can be claimed as the pillar and stay of the truth, the church redeemed, the Church of God.

But some one suggests, this is a very indefinite, intangible, uncertain kind of thing; an airy something without habitation and name. So is life, which has really defied definition. But life forms, only give it room and material. Let the Christian life develop its own form; for every tree of the field grows after its own kind. Do you tell me, or deceive yourself with the saying, that life in Christ is an indefinite power, an airy nothing? Our church organizations may all be traced historically, to social or national surroundings. (*Vide e.g. Hatch, Bampton Lectures, 1880.*) The divine life is "from above," and where that life brings individuals together in Christ, there, and *only there*, is the church. And that is the church against

which the gates of hell shall not prevail; this, the assembly to be presented to the Father, having neither spot nor wrinkle nor any such thing; this the church filled with the Spirit, even life for evermore! "Very broad!" Yes, only not broad in the agnostic sense of the term, for the difference between the broad church of rationalism and the broad church of the Congregational ideal is this, the one "looks unto Jesus," the other has a centre everywhere. The one has a sure object of reverence, the other gazes on wandering stars, with sun, if sun there be, veiled in darkness most profound. Do not let the thought prevail, that there is nothing definite in matters religious but *creed, polity and ritual*. Is a mind loving truth, and earnestly seeking, an "indefinite thing?" Love a mere sound, and nothing more? Balaam, knowing well the blessedness of those whose God was Jehovah, could formulate great truths; he could at the same time encourage Balak in his determination to destroy Israel, and himself lead on to the curse, which in words he was constrained to withhold. The creeds of Christendom have defined, time and time again, the nature of the atonement which the Christ has made for man, and, without exception, have ignored the "love that gave Jesus to die." Yet that love surely has definiteness. Unselfishness, too, is no mere cloud-land that shapes itself and goes, but not a single church polity has sought to make it vital; rather have politics separated and given rise to that world-spirit of trade which competes and excludes, rather than aid and embrace. Justifying the close communion principle of the great body of Baptists on this continent, a leading divine said, "If we admit all Christians to our table, we destroy our denominational justification." True; obliterate the trade-mark and the ware becomes common to the world. A suicidal policy if *competition* is to be the condition of struggle; but a sorry exhibition of that Gospel, whose Author cried, "Come unto Me *all* ye that labor and are heavy laden."

Free from the controversies of creeds; with no ecclesiastical wall of division, it is left for us freely to love as brethren, and to make manifest that oneness of life where all seek not their own, but the things that are Jesus Christ's. Neither creed nor polity can lead us intelligently to sing