The Story of the Churches

The Congregationalists

Leonard W. Bacon

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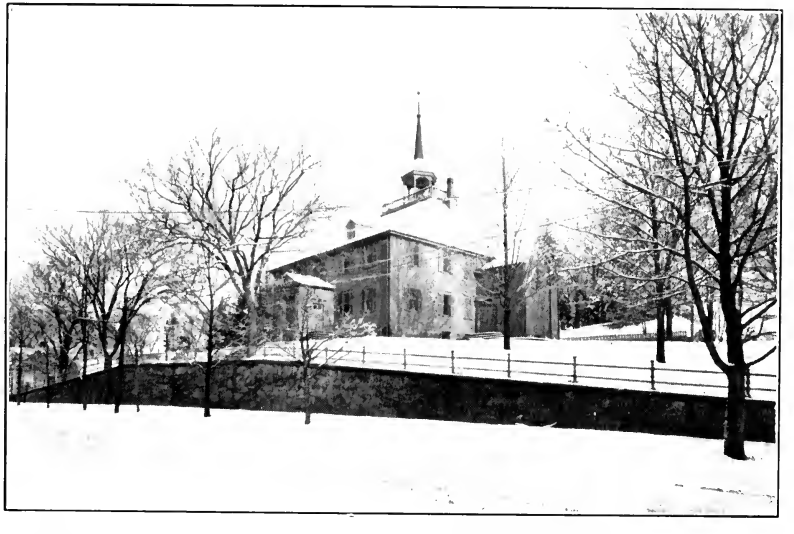

MEETING HOUSE OF THE FIRST PARISH CHURCH IN HINGHAM, MASS., BUILT A. D. 1681

The Story of the Churches

The Congregationalists

By
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Publishers' Note

The aim of this series is to furnish a uniform set of church histories, brief but complete, and designed to instruct the average church member in the origin, development, and history of the various denominations. Many church histories have been issued for all denominations, but they have usually been volumes of such size as to discourage any but students of church history. Each volume of this series, all of which will be written by leading historians of the various denominations, will not only interest the members of the denomination about which it is written, but will prove interesting to members of other denominations as well who wish to learn something of their fellow workers. The volumes will be bound uniformly, and when the series is complete will make a most valuable history of the Christian church.

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The Congregationalists

CHAPTER I

DEFINITION AND PLAN

CONGREGATIONALISM is that principle of church polity according to which the unit of sovereignty in church government is the individual congregation of Christian disciples meeting habitually for worship and fellowship. It is distinguished from Presbyterianism, according to which the unit of sovereignty is the neighbor congregations of a certain region, represented in a delegated clerico-laical body which in turn is subject to constitutional obligations to councils of wider representation and higher authority; it is distinguished from Nationalism, according to which the people of each

Christian country are reckoned as the church of that country, subject to a national hierarchy whether related or unrelated to the civil government; and it is distinguished from Catholicism, which holds that the entire communion of saints in all the world constitutes a single corporation rightfully subject to an individual head.

The history of Congregationalism may be taken as recording the prevalence of this principle of the right of self-government of the individual congregation, as it has been wrought out into practical application in America, and propagating itself like leaven, has widely and deeply affected the administration of other polities at the furthest remove from itself; or as it has been exemplified in those church fellowships, embracing so large a part of Protestant America, by which it has been distinctly accepted; or especially as it is illustrated in the history of the sect that sometimes puts forth the claim to exclusive rights in the title Congre-

gationalist, serving peremptory warning on persons and churches outside of its organization who may use the title as descriptive of their polity, as for infringement of its trade-mark.

The present Story of The Congregationalists, beginning with the evolution of the Congregational polity on the soil of New England, will not avoid any one of these three lines of study. It will incidentally indicate the wide influence, direct and indirect, which their characteristic tenet has had throughout the country on ecclesiastical and even on civil polity. It will show the origin, and in some instances the wide extension and multitudinous increase, of the several sects that are congregational in organization. And it will trace in such detail as the limits of space permit, the progress and changes of that now somewhat highly organized and consolidated sect which claims to be known as *The* Congregationalists. It will include in its view the growth

of like organizations in other countries, and some of the most nobly successful of modern Christian missions.

CHAPTER II

PURITAN IDEALS

It would be most misleading to the student of this part of church history, to assume that the great and splendid body of English clergy, gentry and yeomanry who, to the number of twenty thousand, arrived in New England in the twelve years from 1628 to 1640, came as Congregationalists, to put into operation a preconceived system of church polity. They were rather, as their impassioned declarations testify, devoted and affectionate members of the national Church of England—so devoted and loyal that they had been earnestly intent, long before their departure from England, on seeking its highest interests in a greater purity of discipline and worship, in such wise as to have exposed themselves to the

peril of estate, liberty and life. Thirty years before the great migration, at the accession of James I, the aims of the Puritan party at that time were defined in detail in the famous "Millenary Petition" presented to the new king with the signatures of nearly a thousand of the established clergy. It is notable that they included no objection to the doctrinal formularies of the National Church, nor to its episcopal constitution. The petition called for a relaxation of the rigor of sundry ritual requirements, but its gravest demands were for such an administration of discipline as should relieve the Church which they served and loved of the shame of including in its membership, contrary to the express teaching of the New Testament, the flagrantly and notoriously wicked, and in its clergy, not only the ignorant, incompetent and non-resident, but the openly immoral. Doubtless in the three decades of controversy that had followed, the demands of the Puritan party

had grown in extent and in definiteness, as on the other side new abuses and tyrannies had exasperated the debate. But still the main contention of the reforming party, that which gave them their party name, continued to be the demand that the National Church should no longer be an indiscriminate mingling, both in clergy and in people, of the worthy and the vile, but should be purified. So far as the methods by which this was to be accomplished had become defined in the minds of the leaders, those methods which some of them had seen in successful use among the Reformed churches of the continent and in Scotland, and which had been commended to multitudes of eager students in the university of Cambridge in the lectures of famous Thomas Cartwright, and which are comprehended under the general term of Presbyterianism, were undoubtedly most in favor; though it was impossible that Richard Hooker's great treatise of Ecclesiastical Polity, containing,

with much that was antagonistic, so much that was highly congenial to their own ideas, should not have won the admiring attention and affected the opinions of these thoughtful and studious men.

As between the two possible processes of purifying the Church, the Puritans had not the slightest hesitation. Some earnest spirits, impatient with the slow progress of reform, had taken as their motto, "Reformation without Tarrying for Any," and summoned all faithful Christians to quit the National Church as coming out of Babylon, and to associate themselves in separated congregations. But to the Puritan party in general, this act of rending themselves from fellowship with holy ministers and faithful disciples in the parishes of the establishment was not only condemned as weakening the party of reform by deserting from the fighting line, but was rejected with sincere horror as the sin of schism. Some of the experiments that had been

made, in Separatist congregations of exiles in the Low Countries, had not been attended with such success as to win the respect of critical observers. The Puritan party in the Church of England became the more convinced that the true method of reform was not that of the "come-outers" who would leave the national church to sink the deeper into the corruption in which it was involved, but that of staying within, shunning compliance with wrong, and striving to exclude unfit members and ministers by the ways of discipline pointed out in the Scriptures; it was not by culling out the holy, but by weeding out the reprobate.

The first adventure towards the Puritan colonization of New England illustrates the National Church system in its most amiable aspect. The Rev. John White, for more than twenty years rector of Trinity Church, Dorchester, by his devoted care for his parishioners and his zeal for the interests of

religion, had won from the people the title of "the patriarch of Dorchester." His solicitude for the young men of his flock did not cease when they were absent, as often happened, on fishing voyages to the New England coast. "He conceived the plan of a settlement at some convenient point, where sailors and fishermen, going ashore, might find more comfortable shelter and better supplies than the mere wilderness could give them, and might have the benefit of religious ministrations." A company of "The Dorchester Adventurers" was organized with a capital of £3,000; and some beginnings of a settlement were made on Cape Ann; but after two seasons of experiment the Dorchester Adventurers became discouraged in their hope of dividends and retired from the enterprise. But the seed was quickened when it died, and was "raised in glory."

For the thought of John White, through all discouragements, deepened and widened

in his mind and in the minds of the Puritan leaders with whom he was in correspondence in various parts of England. The current of public events had been for years setting their plans, without their knowing it, towards the west. The ill-starred reign of Charles I, under which Church affairs were dominated by the fierce fanaticism of Laud, was more and more clouding and even quenching the hopes alike of civil liberty and of church reformation. The starting of a poor little colony of Separatists, at Plymouth, which was just emerging from its earliest perils and hardships; and now the attempt at Cape Ann, not yet quite extinct, stirred the minds, not of a few persecuted exiles, but of sundry "knights and gentlemen about Dorchester," together with "several other religious persons of like quality in and about London," to the great design of a Puritan colony across the sea, in which the ideal of a Christian church in a Christian state,

which they had labored, thus far in vain, to realize in their native land, might be attempted without hindrance. With many an example of ruinous failure in colonization to deter them, the noble enterprise was resolved upon, if only "fit men might be procured to go over." The condition was fulfilled when, June, 1628, Capt. John Endicott, in *The Abigail*, with about forty colonists, sailed from Weymouth, the port of Dorchester, for the harbor of Naumkeag, afterwards Salem. About a year afterwards the young colony was reinforced by more than one hundred and fifty persons in three vessels abundantly provisioned. With this company came three ministers carefully selected by the governing company for their fitness for so weighty and exceptional a charge. A historian (not contemporary) relates of the foremost of these that "when they came to the Land's End, Mr. Higginson, calling up his children and other passengers unto the stern of the

ship to take their last sight of England, said, 'We will not say, as the Separatists were wont to say at their leaving of England, Farewell, Babylon! farewell, Rome! but we will say, Farewell, dear England, farewell, the church of God in England and all the Christian friends there. We do not go to New England as Separatists from the Church of England, though we cannot but separate from the corruptions in it; but we go to practice the positive part of church reformation, and propagate the Gospel in America.'" Whether or not the incident occurred as narrated, there is no doubt that it expresses the sincere sentiment of the Puritan colonists, both towards the National Church which they loved, and towards the Separatists whose course they so severely reprobated. They were intent on planting in the wilderness a state and a state-church such as, in their view, England and the Church of England ought to have been. Especially (as their after course

proves) they meant to reproduce whatever was good in that parish system under which each dwelling in the kingdom was assigned to the charge of some minister, and each minister and parish church had a definite field of activity and responsibility.

With conceptions like these, and with a noble self-consecration to Christian duty, the company of about two hundred colonists with Endicott for governor and the three ministers sent out by the Massachusetts Bay Company, set themselves "to practice the positive part of church reformation" on the edge of the wilderness. But meanwhile an incident befell which was destined to have an important bearing on the course of church history in America.

CHAPTER III

PILGRIM AND PURITAN

WHEN the Massachusetts Bay Company planted its well provided colony at Salem, it was not in ignorance of the fact that fifty miles to the south the feeble community of the Plymouth Separatists was struggling into life. But the company's choice of a location was made with no purpose of fellowship with its neighbors. On the contrary, the Pilgrim settlement had, from its beginning, been the object of distinctly unfriendly feeling and deed on the part of the religious party that was dominant in the company. Some of the sorest of the troubles that beset that forlorn hope of a colony in their preparations for the voyage, and pursued them into their refuge in the wilderness, proceeded from that Puritan party

to which they were bound by identity of religious opinion and by feelings of reverence towards its great preachers and theologians. The Puritans abhorred the schism by which the Separatists had torn themselves loose from the general fellowship of English Christians, and had been shocked at the acrimonious denunciations flung back upon the National Church by some who had left it. The record of the seceders had not been altogether such as to command respect. Among them had been martyrs and confessors of whom the world was not worthy. But their earliest leader, Robert Browne, a man of prophetic mind, in whose writings are enunciated those principles of polity both in church and state which after three centuries have come to general acceptance in America, had not in him the stuff for a martyr, and after a stormy day his sun set under a cloud. Of the churches of The Separation, existing in exile under the protection of the Dutch Re-

public, some had brought scandal on their cause, by meddlesome attempts at discipline, by disputes over questions which to us seem frivolous, and by schism within schism.

There was one of these congregations to which no part of this reproach could apply. The little group of neighbors who were wont to assemble, early in the seventeenth century, at a decaying manor-house of the Archbishops of York, of which William Brewster was tenant, in the little village of Scrooby, on the confines of Nottinghamshire, were men and women whose constancy under persecution, whose mutual love and patience, gentleness and moderation towards opponents, and noble perseverance against perils and distresses in the prosecution of a great and beneficent enterprise, would have adorned the martyrology of any age of the Christian Church. These heroic qualities were the fair reflection of the preeminent wisdom and holiness of the

pastor, John Robinson. We recognize in him, and to no small degree in the whole Church which he served as pastor, the combination, so rare in human nature, of uncompromising devotion to ideal truth and duty, with the patience of hope, and a large and loving sympathy with good men who differed from him. The little company of fellow-worshippers with him who succeeded in escaping from the fierce persecution which was resolved that it would neither tolerate them within the realm of England nor suffer them to leave it, purposely avoided implicating themselves in the divisions into which some other communities of exiled Separatists had fallen, and shunning Amsterdam, found a temporary home in the quiet university town of Leyden. Constrained by noble motives, and filled with high hopes of what they might accomplish for the advancement of the Kingdom of God, but fully aware of the perils and distresses that were before

them in an enterprise the like of which had not yet been attempted by Englishmen without disaster, the feeble and ill provided company effected its lodgment on the rock of Plymouth on the shortest and darkest day of the winter of 1620.

Few chapters of human history have been oftener and more worthily told than the story of the Pilgrim colony; and few have better deserved the telling. But in its bearing on the subject of this book it is of less importance than is commonly supposed. The Pilgrims, in their solitary hamlet of Plymouth, were far from having instituted what would be recognized as a Congregational church in the modern sense of the word. Their ideal of church government rejected the radical democratic notions of Robert Browne, and held to a government by the eldership, sanctioned by the tacit or expressed consent of the members. To them the question of the mutual relation of churches was, in their utter iso-

lation, not a practical question. The church which gathered for worship at tuck of drum on the bleak hilltop of Plymouth was what would be called, in our modern nomenclature, an Independent Presbyterian church.

But there was one principle to which the church of Plymouth stood committed by all its antecedents, to wit, that a Christian church is necessarily a church of Christians, withdrawn from fellowship with the openly unbelieving and ungodly and united to each other by a covenant, express or implied, of common duty and mutual faithfulness. Yet even this principle, by which they had justified their withdrawal from the "mixed multitude" of the English parish churches to the conventicle at Scrooby manor-house, was held by the Plymouth exiles in no such bitter and exasperated spirit as had been manifested by some of the Separatists, but in a spirit of patience, respect and loving fellowship, even under

extreme provocation, towards English fellow-Christians who held both their principle and their action in the severest reprobation. The latest words of saintly John Robinson, "found in his study after his decease," were counsels of peace towards the unseparated brethren in the national church of England. In his touching farewell to his departing flock, he spoke in the spirit of prophecy of a time when unseparated Puritan ministers of the Church of England should "come to the practice of the ordinances out of the kingdom" and out of the reach of the Act of Uniformity and the bishops' courts, and predicted that when this should be, "there will be no difference between them and you."

The exiles departed "sorrowing that they should see his face no more." That Robinson was never again to meet the church that he so loved was due in part to the stern disapproval of Separatism which was cherished by the Puritan party in England, and

their jealous unwillingness to permit the reinforcement of the Separatist colony by so important an accession. This was not the only sore distress that had been suffered by the Pilgrims from the sharp antagonism of their Puritan brethren in the national church. The joy that was felt in the lonely hamlet of Plymouth at the news that they were to have Christian neighbors a day's journey to the northward may well have been mingled with serious misgivings.

But the relations between the two settlements were from the beginning most affectionate and fraternal. Upon landing at Salem, the three ship-loads of reinforcements for Endicott's company were found to be infected with the scurvy, a common incident of long voyages in that and even in later centuries. Governor Endicott sent to Plymouth for medical aid, and the visit of the "beloved physician" and deacon of the Pilgrim church, Dr. Samuel Fuller, put an end to all fears, on either side, of estrange-

ment between the neighbor settlements. Whatever prejudgments the Salem people had formed against the Separatists melted away under the kindly ministrations of Deacon Fuller, and under his statement of the principles and usages of the Plymouth church. The letter of thanks from Endicott to the governor of Plymouth is a classic in American church history.

To the Worshipful and my right worthy Friend, William Bradford, Esq., Governor of New Plymouth, these:

RIGHT WORTHY SIR:

It is a thing not usual that servants to one master and of the same household should be strangers; I assure you I desire it not—nay, to speak more plainly, I cannot be so to you. God's people are marked with one and the same mark and sealed with one and the same seal, and have, for the main, one and the same heart guided by one and the same Spirit of truth; and where this is there can be no discord—nay, there must needs be sweet harmony. The same request with you I make unto the Lord, that we may, as Christian brethren, be united by a heavenly and unfeigned

love, bending all our hearts and forces in furthering a work beyond our strength, with reverence and fear fastening our eyes always on him that only is able to direct and prosper all our ways.

I acknowledge myself much bound to you for your kind love and care in sending Mr. Fuller among us; and I rejoice much that I am by him satisfied touching your judgments of the outward form of God's worship. It is, as far as I can yet gather, no other than is warranted by the evidence of truth, and the same which I have professed and maintained ever since the Lord in mercy revealed himself to me; being very far different from the common report that hath been spread of you touching that particular. But God's children must not look for less here below, and it is the great mercy of God that he strengthens them to go through with it.

I shall not need at this time to be tedious unto you; for, God willing, I purpose to see your face shortly. In the meantime, I humbly take my leave of you, committing you to the Lord's blessed protection, and rest."

Your assured loving friend and servant,

JOHN ENDICOTT.

It is not difficult to trace, in the measures taken towards the ordering of church insti-

tutions at Salem, the precautions of prudent men to avoid the ecclesiastical abuses against which they had been protesting in their native land. One of the most offensive of these was the right of patronage by which men were thrust into the ministry and imposed as pastors on unwilling congregations, by the authority of some secular person or corporation. It was easy to see that the conscientious and religious care with which the Massachusetts Company, under whose charter and encouragement the colonists were settled, had secured three clergymen of the highest qualifications for the service of the colony, might, if simply acquiesced in, grow into a precedent for reproducing in the new country the abhorrent simony and spiritual tyranny of the old. It was determined that an appointment by the company that stood in the place of secular governor to the colony conferred no spiritual authority over the community of Christian worshippers in

Salem, and that such authority could come only through the free choice of the people themselves. Accordingly a day of fasting was set apart by the governor, and in the assembly of the people the two Church-of-England clergymen who were regarded as candidates for the eldership in the Salem Church gave their views as to what constitutes a call to the ministry. "They acknowledged there was a twofold calling: the one an inward calling, when the Lord moved the heart of a man to take that calling upon him and fitted him with gifts for the same; the second was from the people, when a company of believers are joined together in covenant to walk together in all the ways of God." By written ballots the two ministers, Skelton and Higginson, were chosen respectively to be pastor and teacher of the church. Then followed the solemn induction into office. "They accepting the choice, Mr. Higginson and three or four more of the gravest members of

the church laid their hands on Mr. Skelton, using prayers therewith. This being done, then there was imposition of hands on Mr. Higginson." The church was thus provided with its teaching eldership, and it was proposed to go forward and complete the organization by the election of other elders and of deacons. But for reasons that do not fully appear, it was deemed best to stay the proceedings at this point. They were not resumed until after other action of quite a different sort, the motive and grave significance of which to the participants in it is easily discernible.

The protest of the Puritan party in the church of England had been not only against an unfit ministry forced upon the churches by secular power or patronage, but also, with not less emphasis, against the indiscriminate mingling, in its membership, of faithful believers in Christ, with the notoriously vile and wicked and even the publicly criminal. What precautions

were they taking against the recrudescence in the new colony of this same abuse which had been found intolerable in England? And how "discern between the righteous and the wicked"? According to the principles of the Puritan Nationalists, this should be accomplished by the faithful exercise of church discipline, excluding from the fellowship of the church the incorrigibly unworthy. The other method, of culling out the well approved disciples from the general multitude and constituting them into a church by themselves—what was this but the very practice of the Separatists, in their zeal for "reformation without tarrying for any," against which the Puritans had protested as the sin of schism? And yet what else was to be done? The early records give indications enough that there was a distinctly and recognizably vicious element mingled with even the choicest companies of colonists. Was it now the duty of the

Salem people, in ordering the beginnings of their church estate, to include in the brotherhood the dubious and the not at all dubious characters whom it would be their next duty to exclude by the painful stages of discipline? These questions may well have occupied the thoughts of the imperfectly organized church, during the stay of proceedings after the ordination of the two teaching elders. Partly, no doubt, through the influence of the Plymouth church, but quite as much under the constraint of the new situation, the Christian people of Salem entered upon a procedure that became a type for church organization throughout New England, and has widely affected the course of church history in the United States, to this day.

The reason assigned for adjourning the further organization of the church had been the expected arrival of another company from England. But without awaiting this

arrival, another day of fasting was appointed for the election of elders and deacons. In preparation for this, action was taken that was logically antecedent to the election of officers, to wit, the constituting of the church. Thirty persons were named to be the first members of the church. A form of mutual covenant was drawn by the pen of Teacher Higginson, and thirty copies of it were written out; and on the appointed day the thirty constituent members solemnly declared: "We covenant with the Lord and one with another, and do bind ourselves, in the presence of God, to walk together in all his ways, according as he is pleased to reveal himself unto us in his blessed word of truth." This done, the church, formally constituted by covenant, presented anew to the pastor and teacher already less formally chosen and inducted into office the invitation to exercise these functions, and once more the divine blessing was invoked upon

them with laying on of hands, consecrating them anew to their sacred work.

The transaction suggests certain reflections:

1. The Christians of Salem did accept, in practice if not in theory, the Pilgrim view that the church was to consist, not of the baptized persons in a community, from whom those proved unworthy should be excluded by process of discipline; but of persons of demonstrated fitness "called out" from the community, with "power to add to their number" persons of like fitness.

2. They probably believed that in these acts they were originating a church, just as the Pilgrims believed that they were creating rights of government by their "social compact" on the *Mayflower*. It is easy for us, with our advantage of perspective, to see that they were only organizing a church already existent. If there had been no church in Salem, by what authority were

the thirty men detailed to do the organizing?

3. The action taken implies a distinct recognition of independence of the national church of England—that the church of England was not the church of New England, any more than it was the church of Scotland. By virtue of removal across the ocean, the colonists, while still owning allegiance to the British crown, and sincerely professing their affection for the national church, had ceased to belong to "the ecclesiastical realm."

4. The action at Salem was, and was meant to be, a distinct repudiation of the sacerdotal conception of the church and ministry. Like the rest of the New England clergy of the first generation, the two ministers of the Salem church had been episcopally ordained in England; but the fact was not regarded as having any validity in Salem. So far were the founders of the colony from any superstitious regard for

"the indelibility of orders," that they not only renewed the laying on of hands, "using prayers therewith," when they blessed the newly inducted ministers in the name of the Lord; but they even thought it no sacrilege to repeat again that solemn act of benediction on the same persons only a few days later.

5. It was far from the thoughts of the Salem colonists to found a *sect.* However mistaken they might be as to the criteria of Christian character, they had no intention of excluding from their fellowship any true disciple of Jesus Christ. As little did they intend to permit any, in the spirit of Separatism, to cut themselves off from the common fellowship and organize themselves into a schismatic conventicle. They were advised that the Separatist minister, Ralph Smith, who had managed to get passage on one of their ships, should not be suffered to remain in the colony, "unless he will be conformable to our government"; and, al-

though not unkindly treated, Smith found more congenial surroundings at Plymouth. In like manner, when two of the leading colonists, the brothers Brown, drawing others with them, set up a separate meeting with the Book of Common Prayer, they were called to account for their schismatic course, and promptly shipped back to England by fiery Governor Endicott, as being of such a factious spirit that "New England was no place for such as they."

A picturesque incident of the organization of the Salem church demands our notice. Before the ordination solemnities were ended, an eagerly awaited but belated shallop landed on the beach at Salem "the messengers of the church at Plymouth." They came into the assembly, Governor Bradford at their head, and in the name of the Pilgrim church declared their "approbation and concurrence" and greeted the new church with "the right hand of fellowship." Thus was emphasized that principle

of mutual communion among independent churches which was to become one of the distinctions of American Congregationalism.

CHAPTER IV

THE PURITAN EXODUS

WHILE these events were in progress at Salem, there was preparing, on the other side of the sea, that notable *coup d' état* which was to result, in a few months, in the creation of a powerful self-governed republic on the shore of the Massachusetts Bay. The signs of hope for the little settlement just planted, the darkening prospects of both church and state in England, alike tended to convince many of the Puritan leaders that the success of both their political and their religious aspirations was to be looked for rather in the New England than in the Old. The spirit of colonization took eager possession of ardent and prophetic minds in various parts of England; but there were especially three centres at which

this spirit was most actively manifest. In "the west country" John White, "the patriarch of Dorchester," had never let go the project of a Christian settlement which had seemed to fail at Cape Ann but had now come to new life in Endicott's young colony at Salem; and he was in correspondence with men of means and influence like-minded with himself. In the northeastern counties, where the famous pulpit of John Cotton at Boston was one of several foci of spiritual light, and where the patient sufferings of the "little flock" of Scrooby had been working like leaven, there were consultations in which persons of high rank and consideration took part. But especially London, the home of patriotic citizenship and Puritan zeal, was a centre of activity and mutual conference in which the movements of different groups were co-ordinated. Not without mature though private counsel, and cautious advice of lawyers, was the bold and brilliant stroke

resolved upon, to vest the official authority of the Massachusetts Company in men who would lead the colonists in person, and take the royal charter, with its ample grant of power, across the sea, to establish the headquarters of authority in the colony itself. The great and good John Winthrop was made governor, and with him, or in surprisingly few months after him, went forth that Puritan migration which never before nor since, in the historic movements of the earth's population, has been equalled for the dignity of its manhood and womanhood. In the year 1630 no fewer than seventeen ships, carrying about one thousand passengers, sailed from English ports for Massachusetts Bay. This was the beginning of The Puritan Exodus. "At the end of ten years from Winthrop's arrival, about twenty-one thousand Englishmen, or four thousand families, including the few hundreds who were here before him, had come over in three hundred vessels, at a

cost of two hundred thousand pounds sterling."

The precedent set by the colonists of Salem, in the organization of their church was followed with remarkable exactness by the succeeding settlements. Conspicuous among them was the company of which Winthrop himself was leader. At its first settlement in Charlestown (whence it removed presently to become the First Church of Boston) the four foremost men of the community, Winthrop, Johnson, Dudley and Wilson, on an appointed day of prayer and fasting, subscribed their names to this covenant:

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in obedience to his holy will and divine ordinance, we whose names are hereunder written, being by his most wise and good providence brought together into this part of America in the Bay of Massachusetts, and desirous to unite ourselves into one congregation or church under the Lord Jesus Christ our Head, in such sort as becometh all those whom he hath redeemed

and sanctified to himself, do hereby solemnly and religiously, as in his most holy presence, promise and bind ourselves to walk in all our ways according to the rule of the gospel, and in all sincere conformity to his holy ordinances, and in mutual love and respect each to other, so near as God shall give us grace.

Thus having "united themselves into a church" by a mutual covenant in which they "bound themselves" to nothing to which they were not already bound as disciples of Christ, they were in a position to admit, or refuse to admit, others to their fellowship. That 30th of July, 1630, was a memorable day in New England history, when, with solemn prayer and fasting in which the churches already constituted in Plymouth and in Salem joined with their newly arrived brethren, the two churches of Charlestown and Watertown were organized and their ministry inducted into office with laying on of hands. The church of Dorchester had this distinction, that al-

ready, as the company was about to sail from Plymouth, it had been organized at a meeting held at "the New Hospital" of that town, when a sermon was preached by "the patriarch" John White.

The most typical of these acts of church organization was that of the founders of New Haven. Led by Davenport and Eaton, they had arrived at "their desired haven" in the early spring of 1638, but not until fourteen months later, after much prayer, study and discussion, did they consider the business fully mature for action. Soon after their landing they had made a provisional "plantation covenant" mutually pledging themselves to be governed in their future action relating either to the church or to the civil order, "by those rules which the Scripture holds forth." During these toilsome first months of the new plantation, while their views of polity in church and state were so deliberately canvassed, they were not without organization. The town

was "cast into several private meetings wherein they that dwelt most together gave their accounts one to another of God's gracious work upon them, and prayed together, and conferred to mutual edification, and had knowledge one of another." When at last they were assembled "in Mr. Newman's barn" the solemnities of the day were introduced by a sermon from Davenport on this text, "Wisdom hath builded her house; she hath hewn out her seven pillars." By common consent it was agreed "that twelve men be chosen, that their fitness for the foundation-work may be tried;" and "that it be in the power of these twelve to choose out of themselves seven that shall be most approved of the major part, to begin the church." It was the 14th of June, 1639, when the "seven pillars" were hewn out. By covenant among themselves, and by receiving others into the same compact, it was held that a church was constituted on the 22d of

August. It is wonderful that in these and like proceedings it did not grow clear to the minds of the founders that instead of creating church and civil state by their "social compact," they were simply putting into orderly and organic form the church and state already in being. With one accord they accepted so much of the Separatist polity as to hold that the church existed by virtue of a mutual agreement (either tacit or expressed) among certain individual believers that they would be a church. It is easy to believe that the example and argument of the Plymouth Separatists had less to do in bringing them to this position, than the exigencies of the situation. To the extreme tenets of the extreme Separatists, renouncing fellowship with faithful ministers and worshippers in the Church of England, the churches of New England generally gave no adhesion.

In the year 1640 the assembling of the Long Parliament secured protection to the

Puritans in England, and the Puritan Exodus to America ceased. At this date there were forty churches in New England, all formed after substantially the same model, beside three in Long Island. The Exodus had included a very large proportion of able and learned ministers, so that it was possible in many churches to realize the ideal of the founders, that each church should be provided with its presbytery of two teaching elders (pastor and teacher) as well as one or more ruling elders. These officers, with deacons who should be the church almoners, were chosen by free election, and the teaching elders inducted into office with the laying on of hands. That no disrespect was intended to the ministry that they had formerly exercised in English parishes was expressly declared in Mr. Wilson's protest to that effect at his ordination as teacher of the Boston Church. But that the former ministry was held to confer no authority over God's heritage in New England was

made equally explicit by the declaration of George Phillips, the intended minister of Watertown, that if his people "will have him stand minister by that calling which he received from the prelates in England, he will leave them."

The churches thus constituted were distinctly Presbyterian in their internal structure, being governed by the board of elders with the sanction, either tacit or explicit, of the brotherhood. In their mutual relations the churches were independent, yet acknowledging the duty of mutual helpfulness and mutual respect and deference. But upon this independence was one serious limitation. In Massachusetts the "Great and General Court" was, in a very practical sense, a Church court. None but communicants in the churches were either electors to it or eligible to it. It "exercised a minute superintendence, after the manner of the English Parliament and Courts Spiritual, . . . on all manner of

ecclesiastical subjects" (Buck's "Massachusetts Ecclesiastical Law," 21). In particular the supreme authority of the colony was resolved not to lose any good that could be saved out of that parochial system under which the England of their time was divided into nine thousand parishes, each with its church and minister. The arriving colonists were not permitted to scatter through the wilderness at pleasure. It was for the colonial government to assign to each successive company its place of habitation, and to draw the boundaries of its township, which were also the parish boundaries, except as, with the increase of population, it by and by became expedient in many cases to divide the township into two or more parishes. Each parish was rigorously required to be provided with church, clergy, meeting-house and parsonage. It was the purpose of the founders that every church should have its well defined responsibility for every soul within its

parish bounds. The adjustment of relative rights and duties between churches and parishioners occupied not a little of the attention of the early colonial governments. The constitution of the New England churches of the first generation may perhaps best be characterized as Presbyterianism with a synod of lay delegates. It was a long process of evolution by which the system now known as Congregationalism came into existence.

CHAPTER V

CONTROVERSY AND COUNCIL

"It must needs be that offenses come." It was only by the pressure of severe exigencies that the polity of the young churches of New England could be completely shaped. One of the first of them was the exasperated controversy that arose over the case of Mrs. Ann Hutchinson. Only four years after the settlement of Boston, and only a year after the arrival of the great John Cotton to become the teacher of the Boston church, this admiring parishioner of his in the old Boston church followed him, attended by her husband, to his new field of work. She had many qualifications for a mischief-maker, a kindly heart and skillful hand in nursing the sick, a ready gift of pious eloquence, an inordinate

conceit of her superior holiness and her special confidential relations with the Almighty, a pleasant way of gently flattering her influential adherents, and a rasping sarcasm for dissentients. With her weekly meeting, at first for women only, in which she criticised the Sunday's sermons, dealing out approval for Mr. Cotton and her brother-in-law Wheelwright as being in the covenant of grace, and disparaging with contemptuous pity the rest of the clergy as being under the covenant of works, she managed before long to get not only the church and the town but the whole colony into a broil. The election of Governor was made to turn on the theological question; and the dashing and impulsive young Harry Vane, newly arrived from England with the prestige of distinguished family and influence at court, was made to supersede the wise and faithful Winthrop. The situation affected the fathers of the colony with a threefold anxiety: first, the preten-

sions of this enthusiastic prophetess to direct revelations from heaven threatened the foundations of the republic which rested on the sufficiency of the Scripture as a guide to political as well as personal life; secondly, the Hutchinson conventicle was of a schismatic temper and tendency, producing, if not seeking, the division of the Boston church into two parties exasperated by personal irritation; thirdly, the teachings of the new leader seemed to be charged with a pernicious and demoralizing antinomianism. The case required action. In a fast-day sermon to the Boston church, Wheelwright, after a manner usual with the supersanctified, essayed to "beat his fellow-servants" denouncing them as "Antichrists"; and was censured for it at the next meeting of the General Court, acting as representative of all the churches.

The "Antinomian Controversy" would not have been entitled to so large space in so condensed a narrative as this, but for its

having been the occasion of the first of those ecclesiastical councils which are so characteristic of American Congregationalism. At the invitation and at the charges of the colonial legislature, a "synod" was convened at Cambridge, which included "all the teaching elders through the country," with "sundry elders from other jurisdictions" and "messengers from all the churches." From the 30th of August to the 22d of September the council sat in solemn, sometimes in tender and tearful debate. At last, with an almost unhoped-for approach to unanimity, it gave its condemnation of eighty-two errors alleged against the party of Mrs. Hutchinson. Even Mr. Cotton was drawn into substantial harmony with the council. The whole course of consultation had been so wise, sincere and Christian, that Governor Winthrop proposed that there should be annual synods. But the centripetal force was well balanced by the centrifugal.

Salutary as had been the influence of the council, the opinion prevailed that it was safer for the independence and liberty of the churches that such assemblies should be convened only as occasion might seem to require.

The action of the civil authority was summary and severe. Some of the adherents of the Hutchinson faction were disfranchised; and the two leaders, Wheelwright and Mrs. Hutchinson herself, were banished. They seem with little doubt to have been willful and insolent mischief-makers in the little community; and in their case, as before in the case of the Browne brothers in Salem, and afterwards in the case of Roger Williams, it was held that persons who could not get on comfortably with their neighbors should seek other neighborhood. There was more justification and less hardship in such a judgment, in the feeble beginnings of a small community than there would have

been afterwards, under settled and assured institutions and a wider domain.

The occasions for further consultation among the churches were not long in arising. In 1643, six years from the adjournment of the first Cambridge synod, a meeting of the clergy of the several colonies was held, also at Cambridge, at which Cotton and Hooker presided and questions of polity were discussed. But three years more had not passed before new exigencies demanded the convoking of another "synod," not of the clergy only but of the churches. To begin with, there were considerable divergences of opinion and practice in the internal administration of some leading churches of New England. The ministers of Newbury and Hingham, going a step beyond the generally accepted aristocratic notion of church government, would limit the action of the membership to the election of teaching and ruling elders; while the general tendency of the

churches was in the contrary direction, towards greater power and responsibility in the private members. Secondly, like questions were beginning to agitate the Puritan party in England, and questions bearing on the momentous task of the reorganization of the Church of England were formulated and sent across the sea—first a series of Nine Questions and then a series of Thirty-two Questions—which were answered by eminent New Englanders, Davenport, and Cotton, and Richard Mather, but which were felt to be entitled to a more authoritative answer than could be given by individuals. But the chief urgency for consultation proceeded from the formidable consequences, destined to grow more formidable still through several agitated generations, of the principle adopted from the Separatists, that the purity of the church was to be sought, not by the eliminating of unfit members, but by the culling of choice material for a new

organization that should decide on applications for admission. The colonies had to face the fact that already in 1643 a painfully large proportion of the people were standing outside of the church. In Massachusetts, where the suffrage was conditioned on church membership, the active citizenship was reduced to an oligarchy of about one in ten. It was not only felt as a grievance to be thus shut out from the body politic; but some were sincerely complaining of the spiritual privation of being excluded, themselves and their families, from the sacraments; on the other hand, the churches themselves felt weakened by the exclusion of many who could hardly be pronounced less fit for church fellowship than those who were within the pale.

And yet it does not appear that there was any intent on the part of the Founders to draw lines excluding from the church any sincere disciple of Jesus Christ. The idea

of establishing sectarian churches for a certain style of Christian from which other sorts of Christians should be excluded belongs to a later age, and would have been abhorrent to the first generation. They sincerely meant that all the faithful Christians of each town should be the church of that town, exercising all the functions of a church free of interference from without; but in seeking this worthy object they fell into two grave mistakes. 1. In their righteous reaction from the miserable corruption of the English parish churches they went to the opposite extreme, not only putting out the demonstrably unworthy, but keeping out those whose worthiness was not satisfactorily demonstrated. In their diligent searchings of Scripture for rules of church order, they missed the lesson of the parable of The Tares of the Field. 2. Their chief criterion of fitness for church fellowship, the narration by the candidate of his conscious experience of a change divinely

wrought in his character, was most fallacious, easily admitting many unfit, but practically excluding some whose lives approved them to all observers as being of the number of the saints. The growing number of good men outside of the church, some of them claiming as of right privileges which were denied them, made a third occasion for the Synod of Cambridge, 1646–48.

The story of the summoning of the synod, its gathering from the four colonies, its successive adjournments, and the political difficulties in which it was somewhat implicated—"is it not written in the chronicles?" It may be found exact and ample in Professor Walker's "Creeds and Platforms." The seventeen chapters of the Cambridge "Platform of Church Discipline Gathered out of the Word of God" embodied the results of twenty years of study and experience, and remained for a hundred years an authoritative statement of the polity of the New England churches. The

titles of the chapters indicate the subject-matter.

"Chapter I. Of the Form of Church Government, and that it is one, immutable, and prescribed in the Word of God.

"Chapter II. Of the Nature of the Catholic Church in general, and in special, of a particular visible church.

"Chapter III. Of the Matter of the Visible Church, both in respect of Quality and Quantity.

"Chapter IV. Of the Form of a Visible Church, and of church covenant.

"Chapter V. Of the first subject of Church Power; or, to whom church power doth first belong.

"Chapter VI. Of the Officers of the Church, and especially of pastors and teachers.

"Chapter VII. Of Ruling Elders and Deacons.

"Chapter VIII. Of the Election of Church Officers.

"Chapter IX. Of Ordination and Imposition of Hands.

"Chapter X. Of the Power of the Church, and its Presbytery.

"Chapter XI. Of the Maintenance of Church Officers.

"Chapter XII. Of Admission of Members into the Church.

"Chapter XIII. Of Church Members: their removal from one church to another; and of letters of recommendation and dismission.

"Chapter XIV. Of Excommunication and other Censures.

"Chapter XV. Of the Communion of Churches one with another.

"Chapter XVI. Of Synods.

"Chapter XVII. Of the Civil Magistrate's Power in Matters Ecclesiastical."

It is of practical as well as historical interest to us of the present age to note the points at which existing Congregational churches have departed from this early type.

I. The high *jure divino* pretensions of the Founders that theirs is the only authorized and prescribed form of church government, if sometimes entertained, are now rarely urged.

II. The negative statement that the New Testament church was "neither national, provincial nor classical," but "only congregational," is still accepted by Congregationalists.

III. The principle that a church should consist of "saints by calling" and of "the children of such, who are also holy," is accepted in statement, even when disregarded in practice; but the principle enunciated with emphasis here and elsewhere in the "Platform," that a minister is such only by virtue of his election to office in a congregation, and has no ministerial standing outside of that congregation or after the close of his official function therein, however essential to the logical unity of the system, is generally abandoned, and the idea of a min-

isterial order, against which the fathers protested, is generally accepted.

IV. The assertion that a mutual covenant is the necessary condition of the existence of a church, and the only source of church authority, if accepted and acted on by modern Congregationalists in the internal affairs and mutual relations of their churches, is frankly abandoned by their recognition of churches otherwise constituted. Happily, the "Platform" cautiously provides that a covenant merely implied, "without any writing or expression of words at all," may be valid.

V. The tenet that church authority, by the charter of the church, which is the New Testament, is vested primarily in the brotherhood, is accepted; but that it is to be exercised only in the election of elders is generally declined.

VI. and VII. The ideal of the Founders was that each church should be equipped with its presbytery of not less than three—

pastor, teacher and ruling elders. The first two giving themselves wholly to the ministry of the word and sacraments, were to be supported by the church. The ruling elder was charged with the executive functions of the church, and with not a few of the spiritual. The presbytery were jointly to administer the government of the church, with the consent (tacit or express) of the brotherhood. This ideal ceased to be realized after the first generation. The distinction between pastor and teacher, always somewhat tenuous, was insufficient to justify each little congregation in the cost of maintaining two ministers. The duties of ruling elder were such, in point of difficulty and delicacy as the fit person could rarely be induced to undertake. Finally, the growing spirit of democracy, both in state and in church, was more averse to the vesting of church authority in an elective eldership. At the present day, the officers of a Congregational church are ordinarily a

pastor and deacons, and such committees as the church may wish. The ideal of the congregational presbytery survives only in the "Standing Committee" which fulfills some of its functions.

VIII and IX. The sturdy protest of the Founders against regarding ordination as a quasisacrament conferring permanent rank among Christians has been forsaken. With them ordination was nothing but the solemn inauguration of church officers into the places to which they had been elected. The imposition of hands might be by other elders in the same church, or by some of the people, or even (if thought best) by elders of other churches. A minister "clearly loosed from his office-relation" is no longer a minister nor qualified to act as such, until again called to office, in which case he may be ordained to the office, with imposition of hands. The general practice of the Congregational churches of the present day proceeds upon

the opposite theory, that ordination confers upon the subject a permanent ministerial status. At his first induction into church office he is said, in Presbyterian phrase, to be "ordained and installed." Afterwards, at any future settlement, he is said to be simply "installed" and (as if conforming to some sacerdotal notion of the "indelibility of orders") the laying on of hands is solemnly omitted.

X. The views of the aristocracy of the eldership drawn out in detail in this chapter, are no longer entertained.

XI. The moral principle binding it as an obligation on those who profit by the ministrations of the church to contribute to the maintenance of it, are as distinctly recognized now as ever; the enforcing of these obligations by the civil power is no longer resorted to.

XII. In this chapter on "Admission of Members," two things are noteworthy: 1, the rigorous insistence on evidence of re-

pentance and faith, to be presented by each candidate in the form of "a personal and public confession and declaring of God's manner of working upon the soul;" 2, the emphatic absence of any other test. It is the obvious intention of the Founders that the church of each community was to include all penitent believers there dwelling. The notion that a church might be organized of a certain class of Christians, from which certain other Christians should be intentionally excluded by a prescribed doctrinal or other test was foreign to their conception of the church.

XIII. Both in the theory and in the practice of the early days, the church assumed a responsibility for the movements of its members such as would be neither claimed nor conceded at present.

XIV, XV, XVI. The general principles here enunciated have not ceased to express the views of Congregational churches. Throughout the "Platform" it is to be ob-

served that while "high" views of the authority of the eldership are set forth; nevertheless, in distinct contradiction to the Presbyterianism of Newbury and Hingham, it is recognized that the ultimate authority in questions of admitting or excluding is vested in the brotherhood. The democratic principle thus laid down as of divine authority has gained more and more in general recognition and in width of application.

XVII. It is much to the honor of the wisdom of the synod that the concluding chapter "Of the Civil Magistrates' Power in Matters Ecclesiastical," contains so little to provoke the dissent of later ages. A change that is rather of practice than of principle has necessarily followed upon the change from homogeneous communities to communities divided by the widest divergences of opinion and organization. A worthy jealousy of that Erastianism of the English Church which their souls abhorred, saved them from grave mistakes.

Two of the topics commended to the Synod by the General Court of Massachusetts received little attention. The growing difficulties attending on the question of "baptism and the persons to be received thereto," were left unsolved. The duty of preparing a Confession setting forth the doctrinal tenets held in common by the Christians of New England was superseded by the timely arrival, fresh from the hands of its makers, of the Westminster Confession, which met with the unanimous and glad approval of the Synod, "for the substance thereof," as "very holy, orthodox and judicious in all matters of faith." For more than one hundred and fifty years, the Westminster standards continued to be referred to by men of differing theological parties as expressing the common belief of the churches; and in families and even in the common schools the "Shorter Catechism" was used as a manual of religious instruction.

CHAPTER VI

HALF-WAY COVENANT

THE question which the synod at Cambridge had pushed aside still insisted on an answer. A conflict seemed to be growing more serious with the lapse of every year, between two ideals, both dear to the Puritan heart:—the purity of the church, as consisting of "visible saints and their children," and the parish system by which the whole population of the several towns should be held under the tutelage of the churches. The growing danger was seriously felt by both parties. The churches and pastors saw the increasing number of those who failed to pass the accepted criteria of membership, and were in danger of drifting afar from any relation to the church; and on the other hand those who

had been baptized into the church, who held and cherished the truth that had been taught them, and whose lives were without reproach, but who were unable to testify to the conscious experience of a spiritual change from death to life, found not only themselves debarred from the communion, but their children excluded from baptism as aliens and "strangers from the covenants of the promise." The situation was growing each year more tense, and there were tendencies in two opposite directions towards a solution of it. One was towards the severely logical individualism of the Baptists, which had no place for infant baptism or infant church-membership. The other was towards "the parish way," or the Presbyterian way, according to which the baptized children of the parish, arriving at years of discretion and being without reproach, were all to be welcomed to the Lord's table. That the accepted criterion of fitness for church-membership

was fallacious, that, strictly applied, it would have excluded from communion the foremost theologian and saint of the contemporary Puritan party, Richard Baxter, was not going to be made entirely clear to their successors until six generations afterwards (1847) by Horace Bushnell in his treatise of "Christian Nurture."

The divergence of opinion and of practice was so great and so manifestly increasing as to call for action on the part of the colonial legislatures—always prone to an exorbitant sense of their responsibility in spiritual matters. In 1657 the Massachusetts General Court, moved thereto by Connecticut, invited a conference of leading pastors who, gathering at Boston to the number of seventeen, gave counsel decidedly in favor of a more relaxed rule than that of the Founders. But this was far from appeasing the controversy. The sincere and painful anxiety of such venerated men as Davenport and Charles

Chauncy prevailed with many others against any abatement of the conditions of membership in the church. A true synod, including not ministers only but "messengers of the churches," was summoned to meet at Boston in 1662, and the number in attendance—more than seventy—was proof of the gravity of the question at issue. After protracted and earnest discussion, by a great majority but in face of an earnest protest from some of the best men, the main question before the synod was thus resolved:

"Church-members who were admitted in minority, understanding the doctrine of faith and publicly professing their assent thereto; not scandalous in life, and solemnly owning the covenant before the church, wherein they give up themselves and their children to the Lord and subject themselves to the government of Christ in the church,—their children are to be baptized."

It was an illogical compromise between

irreconcilable principles. It came, indeed, into general use in New England, but never with universal consent. Instead of ending controversy, it intensified it, giving rise to a copious polemical literature. In conspicuous instances, as in Hartford and in Boston, it rent churches asunder. From New Haven the great and good Davenport, foreseeing the ruin about to befall his cherished ideals through the merger of that little republic with Connecticut, left behind him the fair plain that was dearer to his heart than native land, exclaiming "in New Haven Colony Christ's interest is miserably lost," and went to assume, in his old age, the pastoral office in the First Church in Boston, from which many members had withdrawn to practise the less rigid system in the Third Boston Church—the "Old South." The "Half-Way Covenant" continued in general use for nearly a century, until it melted away in the fervent heat of "the Great Awakening," or withered

under the rigors of the Edwardean theology.

An even larger relaxation of the conditions of church communion was proposed by one of the saintliest and most spiritually successful pastors of the time—Solomon Stoddard of Northampton. He held that the baptized church-member sound in doctrine and of unblemished life should be not merely admitted to a quasi-fellowship, transmissible in turn to his children, but welcomed to full communion, with the hope that the sacraments of the church would be effectual, with the word, in the work of grace of which the candidate had been thus far unconscious. This view and practice gained not a little currency. It was a frank abandonment of the church-principle which the Founders had adopted from the Separatists of Plymouth. Under the influence of Stoddard's grandson, colleague, and successor in the Northampton church, Jonathan Edwards, the churches began the

painful return to their earlier principles. At the present day those principles are generally held in the Congregational churches of America; but with an intelligence and liberality in the application of them, by which some of the embarrassments encountered in the early days are avoided.

CHAPTER VII

REFORMATION AND INNOVATION

THE hopes that had been honestly entertained of great good to churches and people, to result from the successive councils of pastors and of churches were not realized. At the end of a half century from the great Puritan migration, the men of the second generation looked about them on that field in which, in prayer and suffering and eager hope, the fathers had sowed "wholly a right seed," and felt something of the dismay with which the servants of the householder put to their lord the question, "Whence then hath it tares?" This garden of the Lord seemed overrun with foul weeds. Through what agitating vicissitudes these colonies had passed, in these fifty years! The tyranny of Charles and Laud, that had sent the fathers of New

England across the ocean, had given place to the Long Parliament and the Commonwealth, and this in turn to the Protectorate. And now, at last, the Restoration had placed the perfidious Stuarts again in power, and was threatening to exterminate the chartered liberties of the colonies, and overthrow their institutions, civil and ecclesiastical. On our own side of the sea, the noble figures of the first leaders were no more seen; only a few venerable heads, as of John Eliot and Governor Bradstreet, remained of all that goodly fellowship. There were many signs of outward prosperity. The three pioneer churches of Plymouth, Salem and Boston had grown to some six score. But it seemed to some that he who had multiplied the people had not increased the joy. There had been failure of crops and shipwrecks at sea. The colonies had been scourged by pestilences. The long peace with the Indians—reward of just and generous dealing with

them on the part of the colonists—had been followed by the horrors and desolations of King Philip's war. These were only part of the multiplying disasters which stirred men's minds to ponder "the causes and state of God's controversy" with the people. A memorial to the General Court of Massachusetts was presented by eighteen of the clergy led by Increase Mather, then easily the foremost man in New England, asking that a synod of the churches be called to consider the questions: What are the evils that have provoked the Lord to bring his judgment on New England? and What is to be done that those evils may be reformed?

Thus was constituted "The Reforming Synod," whose answer to the first question proposed recounted thirteen prevailing evils as signs of growing worldliness and ungodliness; and to the second question prescribed twelve remedies: 1. Good example on the part of those in authority, in

family, in church and in state. 2. A renewed declaration of adherence to "the faith and order of the Gospel." 3. Greater strictness in admitting to full communion. 4. Faithfulness in church discipline, not only towards parents, but towards the children of the church. 5. The restoration of the complete ministry, in each church, of pastor, teacher, and ruling elders. 6. That the magistrates should see to it that the church officers have due support. 7. Faithful execution of wholesome laws, in particular the laws restricting the sale of strong drink. 8. The solemn and explicit renewal of covenant. 9. In such renewal, distinct pledges of reformation of prevailing sins. 10. In renewing covenant, that the churches agree in common vows "to promote the interest of holiness and close walking with God." 11. Effectual care for the schools and the college. 12. Earnest prayer that God "would be pleased to rain down righteousness upon us."

The remaining task of "The Reforming Synod" was an easy one. Already the Westminster Confession had been formally and sincerely declared to express the doctrinal belief of the New England churches; and it is wonderful how little, in an age of earnest theological study, had been the deflection from that standard. The very slight amendments to that document proposed at the Synod of "the Congregational Churches of England" at the Savoy in London in 1658 sufficed to make it representative of the singularly unanimous opinions of the Massachusetts churches of 1680. It is characteristic of Congregationalism on both sides of the sea, that this "Declaration" was intended in "no way to be made use of as an imposition upon any." The setting up of prescribed forms of doctrinal statement to which assent should be exacted, was the device of a later age.

The "Reforming Synod" was the last of the church councils summoned by civil au-

thority in Massachusetts. In the political changes of England, the theocratic government of the colony had lapsed and the royal governors and their councillors had no mind to act as nursing fathers to the churches. And yet there were not wanting urgent occasions for the sort of tutelage which the General Court had been wont to exercise. An event occurred in Boston in 1699, which made an epoch in the history of American Congregationalism, and at the time profoundly grieved and even alarmed those who cherished the New England theology and polity. A small group of young men of high consideration, including some men of property, built a new meeting-house and organized a fourth Boston church—the "Brattle Church"—announcing at the same time, on the one hand, their adherence to the doctrinal standards of Cambridge and Westminster, and on the other their distinct departure from some of the prevailing usages of the colony. They desired that

the ordeal of a public recital of one's intimate spiritual experiences should no longer be imposed upon candidates for membership in the church; that not communicants only, but all who shared in supporting the minister should be allowed a voice in his election; that any child might receive baptism, who should be presented by Christian sponsors; and that in the services of public worship there might be used the simple reading of Scripture without comment, and also the Lord's Prayer. These demands, formulated in a "Manifesto," were of themselves sufficiently startling to the theologians of the time and place; but the mode of procedure in the institution of the new church was even more offensive. Respectfully invoking the fraternal fellowship of the neighbor churches, they nevertheless effected their organization without advice or consent of council. Under the old régime, the civil authorities would have had somewhat to say in the case; but as

things now stood, the Act of Toleration, enacted for the relief of dissenters from the established Church of England was equally a protection to a departure from the ways of the established churches of New England. But a still more distinct affront to the principles of the fathers was the course pursued in the settlement of Benjamin Colman as pastor. He was in England at the time, and rather than encounter the exasperated prejudices of the Boston clergy, he was advised to procure ordination "*sine titulo*" from the Presbytery of London. Both the ordination and the assumption of office which followed were an open defiance of the example of the fathers and of their principles as enunciated a half-century before in the Cambridge Platform. It was much to the credit of the Boston churches that they could condone such irregularities and, with not much delay, receive "the Manifesto church" to fellowship. But the indignation of conservative men, like the

Mathers, father and son, was great. The foundations were destroyed, and what should the righteous do? Increase Mather, recounting these and other innovations, declared "if we espouse such principles as these, we give away the whole Congregational cause at once, and a great part of the Presbyterian discipline also." Nevertheless the new church took root and flourished.

In their reasonable fears of a general wreck of the church-system planted at such cost and attended by so many signs of divine blessing, the churches missed the salutary constraint and guidance of the Christian magistrate, so lately withdrawn. In view of the possibilities of disorder that loomed before them, it is no wonder that serious thoughts arose of what good results might follow from a more solid organization of ministers and churches for mutual control and supervision. The matter was pondered in the several neighborhood meetings of pastors, and in the general Minis-

ters' Convention at Boston in 1704, and the result was a draft of constitution for a "consociational" system like what, only three years later, was carried into effect in Connecticut, under the Saybrook Platform. The current of feeling was setting strongly in this direction. It is only the tiro in church history who will be surprised to find in the front rank of this conservative reaction the names of some of the leaders in the liberal innovations of "the Manifesto church."

It was only in Connecticut that the consociational system went into practical operation. This colony, happy in its comparative obscurity, had escaped the revolution that had overthrown the Massachusetts theocracy. Almost unimpaired by foreign interference it maintained the popular institutions devised by the genius of Thomas Hooker. Its legislature still had power, and only too ready a will, to exercise its episcopal jurisdiction over the churches.

This lay body felt, not less keenly than the clerical meetings in Massachusetts, the perils of the times. Not without correspondence with the leading ministers of the older colony, the General Assembly was moved to enact a statute "ordaining and requiring" that in each county the ministers, with such messengers as the churches should see fit to appoint, should meet and consider the subject of methods of ecclesiastical discipline, and that each of these county meetings should send two or more delegates to Saybrook, at the next Commencement of the infant College, and that the synod thus constituted should "draw a form of ecclesiastical discipline" to be submitted to the legislature for approval, at its next session. The result of the synod's deliberation was the fifteen articles of "The Saybrook Platform." This, being submitted to the legislature, was eagerly approved, with an ordinance that the churches "thus united in doctrine,

worship and discipline be, and for the future shall be owned and acknowledged, established by law." The Platform provided for one or more Associations of ministers in each county, and that conterminous with the district of each Association should be a standing council or "Consociation" of churches, in which each church should be represented by pastor and delegate, and which should take judicial cognizance of cases brought before it, and "hear and determine" them. According as its provisions might be construed rigorously or liberally, the Platform would be either tantamount to a Presbyterian discipline, or would be a methodized form of promoting the fraternal fellowship of the churches. This divergence of interpretation was put upon the instrument from the beginning. In Fairfield County the high-church Presbyterian construction prevailed. In the contiguous county of New Haven, the Platform was ratified by

the representatives of the churches, as a means of promoting communion of churches, only with express reservation of the rights and liberties of the churches. The consociation system continued in more or less vigorous life for a century and a half, though meanwhile the legal sanction of it had been repealed. The historical discourse at the one hundreth and fiftieth anniversary of the Synod of Saybrook was spoken of by some, at the time, as "the funeral sermon of the Saybrook Platform." The same meeting of the General Association of the State witnessed the inception of a system of church "conferences" for mere purposes of fellowship and practical evangelization, having no governmental function; and by these the standing councils of consociation have been gradually and generally superseded.

The current which, at the end of the seventeenth century was setting so strong towards a more compacted government of

the churches, arrived at nothing in Massachusetts. In Connecticut it created a distinct type of Congregationalism, having affinities with Presbyterianism, with which by and by it was to enter into an alliance that should have an important influence on the course of American church history.

CHAPTER VIII

A DEMOCRATIC REACTION

THE powerful current which, in Massachusetts, was setting towards confederation in church government, bearing on its surface the most eminent leaders of society, did not long flow without encountering a more powerful counter-current, or rather undertow.

While the Puritan institutions, in both church and state, had been of a notably aristocratic character, the whole condition of society was tending more and more towards democracy. This tendency, in the Bay Colony, was not hindered but rather intensified by the recurring conflict with intrusions of court and parliament and bishops, and by the arrogance of the petty vice-regal court and its adherents of "the

sect of the Herodians." While the Mathers and other eminent conservatives were planning measures for limiting the sovereignty of the individual church, and for confirming the control of the eldership, a contrary feeling was growing in the popular heart, and was about to come to commanding expression.

JOHN WISE, one of the foremost names in American literature of the colonial period, was a Protestant of the Protestants. His first appearance in history is in the act of protesting in the town meeting of Ipswich against a tax unlawfully imposed by Governor Andros, a protest so bold and effective that the speaker was arrested, deposed from his office of pastor, and imprisoned. When Andros was overthrown and (in his turn) imprisoned, the pastor, now restored to his charge, and recognized as a tribune of the people, lent a strong hand in the reorganization of the government; he was chaplain to the colonial troops in Governor

Phips's Canada expedition, and proved his bravery in the field as well as his prowess in debate. This was the man, "the first great American democrat," as Prof. Moses Coit Tyler has styled him, who boldly stepped into the lists, undeterred by the supercilious sneers of the great men of his time, as champion of the rights of the churches and their members. Two little books of his were an open challenge to generally prevailing views and usages. One, published in 1710, was entitled: "The Churches' Quarrel Espoused; or a reply in satire to certain proposals made in answer to this question, What further steps" [are to be taken, that the councils may have due constitution and efficacy in supporting, preserving and well ordering the interests of the churches in the country]? "By John Wise, pastor to a church in Ipswich." The title of the other book, published in 1717, was: "A Vindication of the Government of New England Churches:

drawn from antiquity; the light of nature; holy Scripture; its noble nature; and from the dignity divine providence has put upon it." Critics are agreed in extolling the originality, wit, eloquence and power that characterize these writings. They deal with the foundation principles, not only of church government, but of all government, declaring "that a democracy in church or state is a very honorable and regular government according to the dictates of right reason." They powerfully influenced the later development of the New England church polity, in the direction both of democracy within the church, and independence among the churches. And their influence on civil affairs was not less notable. In 1772, on the eve of the war of independence, these rousing defenses of the rights of the people were remembered and drawn from their oblivion and reprinted in Boston in two large editions in that single year. But admirable as they are in themselves,

there is reason to believe that they were in some measure consequence as well as cause of the tendency in the popular mind towards liberty and liberality in church and in state.

CHAPTER IX

A RETROSPECT

THE eve before the dawn of "The Great Awakening" is an epoch from which to look backward over the first century of the Congregational churches of America.

The four colonies which in 1643, had combined in the first federal union in America, were Plymouth, Massachusetts, Connecticut and New Haven. These had now become merged into two, and within the boundaries of these two, Massachusetts and Connecticut, the system of Congregational churches had had its growth and evolution.

Of the ideals in the minds of the Founders of these churches, some had endured with persistent vitality. That there should be a system of parish churches, every town

or precinct of a town having its church charged with the oversight of the population, which, in turn, was under obligation for the maintenance of the church—this was the invaluable contribution to American civilization from the National Church from which the Puritan colonists came forth. In both jurisdictions it had been maintained almost unimpaired. In exceptional and very rare cases a "poll-parish" had been created consisting of individuals or families not defined by boundaries, but adhering by choice to a certain congregation. Provision was granted, grudgingly at first, afterwards liberally, for separate meetings of dissenters from the parish church.

The purity of the church, which had been a leading aim of the colonists in their migration into the wilderness, continued to be insisted on with a zeal intensified by remembrance of abuses in the parish churches of England. The church was to be made

up of "visible saints," and must be constituted by a mutual covenant. But the adoption of impracticable criteria of "visible sanctity" had led into difficulties which inevitably modified the polity of the churches. The notion that one's spiritual state could be diagnosticated by a study of the "rational symptoms" in each case, led to the exclusion from the privileges of the church of many who clearly ought not to have been excluded, and so to the admission of them to a quasi-membership by a "half-way covenant" the terms of which, honestly accepted, implied unreserved Christian discipleship. Like considerations, together with the popular principle, "no taxation without representation," led to the organization of the "ecclesiastical society" having charge of the temporalities of the church, and having a vote, conjointly with the church, in the election of pastor.

The refusal, in the first generation, to

recognize any such thing as a rank or order of ministers other than the officers, for the time being, of a congregation; and the claim that ordination was merely a form of inaugurating such officers into their local functions, had faded out. It was coming to be understood that one who had been ordained to the ministry of one church continued thereafter to be regarded in all the churches as of ministerial rank.

The attempt of the Founders to organize in every church a presbytery of two teaching elders and one or more ruling elders, had fallen by its own weight and costliness, and the general usage was one minister to each church. Thus the government of the congregation, which had been Presbyterian, when the presbytery dwindled to one man became virtually episcopal. The polity was felt on all hands to be in perilously unstable equilibrium. An allegiance that might be conceded to a representative body of three or more, would become most

precarious when claimed for a single individual. The escape from this situation must be either in the direction of classical government, as proposed in Massachusetts and effected in Connecticut; or in the rehabilitation of the authority of the people, as demanded by Robert Browne 150 years before, and now again by John Wise.

The principle of the fellowship of the churches, illustrated from the beginning and articulated with emphasis in the Cambridge Platform, had suffered no decline. On the contrary, as the supervision of the civil government became relaxed, and divergencies of sentiment began to appear, and here and there a dissenting congregation, Baptist or Episcopalian, was formed, the need of mutual counsel and concerted action in matters of grave moment and common concern became the more apparent. There was a serious divergence of method between Massachusetts and Connecticut, one adhering to the early practice

of acting by councils strictly occasional, dissolving when the occasion ceases, the other organizing standing councils within definite territories. There were disadvantages in each method; one was liable to irregularity, the other trenched upon liberty. But there was one form of organization that had taken permanent root. The "Associations" or clubs of neighboring ministers for mutual improvement had come into general favor and were found to serve a useful purpose in introducing and recommending candidates to the churches, "for the trial of their gifts." By a phrase naturally borrowed from the Presbyterian vocabulary, this recommendation, given after examination of the candidate's qualifications, came to be called a "license to preach." It had no more authority than the churches chose to concede to it; and (to the credit of their good sense) they commonly conceded very much.

Thus, in the course of a hundred years,

there had grown up in these colonies, from its roots in the New Testament scriptures, a complete ecclesiastical polity. In twenty years from the landing at Salem, the great Puritan migration had ceased to flow; in fact the reflux, it is estimated, carried back to England more persons than had originally come thence. But their posterity had peopled the coasts of the two colonies and the Connecticut River valley with towns and villages, each with its church and its "learned and orthodox minister" and its school; and at cost of immense sacrifice in those days of poverty, two colleges, destined to take rank among the famous universities of the world, were training young men in the higher learning for service in church and in civil state.

The constellation of great men who had presided over the birth of these churches had long ago sunk below the horizon. Hooker, Davenport, Cotton, Eliot, Richard Mather, had been succeeded by men of the

second and third generations, among whom Increase and Cotton Mather of Boston and Pierpont of New Haven were eminent. The literature of the church had grown large, being copiously increased with every new question that emerged. The duty of preaching the gospel to the heathen Indians, so earnestly laid to heart in the first beginnings of settlement, had never been neglected. The early endeavors of Roger Williams and John Eliot had been supplemented by the labors of many a village pastor and his church, favored by slender appropriations from that most ancient of Protestant missionary societies founded under Oliver Cromwell.

And here is a curious fact, not without parallel in church history:—in these colonies, "whose end was religion," where every man was a theologian, and the chief themes of popular discussion were theological, and the literature was exclusively theological, and where variations of opinion

and divergent tendencies were distinctly asserting themselves, there was nevertheless no separation into theological parties. Under no constraint, and with apparent sincerity, there was general agreement in referring to the Westminster Confession as slightly amended by the Savoy Synod in 1658, as expressing the common belief of the New England churches.

CHAPTER X

GREAT AWAKENING

THE third decade of the eighteenth century closed with the New England churches resting under a wide-spread shadow of depression and discouragement. Fifty years before (1680) the "Reforming Synod" had testified to a like depression; and its warning and exhortation and the "mighty cry" for divine help to which it had stirred up the people had not been in vain. There had been signs of renewed life; but the torpor had come back over the churches "as the clouds return after the rain." We have not to seek far to find causes for the spiritual declension. The fifty years past had been years of almost incessant war with the Indians, and of political agitation in Massachusetts. The frequent and some-

times acrimonious controversies over church questions were not usually means of grace. But it is common to lay the chief blame for the declension on the general adoption of the "half-way covenant." The real blame was due to the defective practical theology that necessitated the half-way covenant. The notion that persons freely and unreservedly pledged to every duty of Christian discipleship should be debarred from the communion of the church simply for lack of a certain passive experience confessedly beyond their power to attain was a notion self-condemned before honest consciences. To admit these persons grudgingly to a "half-way" membership that should empower them to present their children for baptism, did not solve the difficulty. The real solution lay in recognizing that a willing heart for all the will of Christ was itself a divine gift and an evidence of regeneration. The fault of the time was not in receiving such to "half-way" membership,

but in not welcoming them to full communion. The dullness and coldness of the churches is often ascribed to the admission of so many as "proselytes of the gate" to a quasi-membership. It might have been in some measure happily relieved by opening the gate and admitting them to the responsibilities and privileges of brethren.

So thought Solomon Stoddard, whose frontier parish of Northampton, on the Connecticut River, was destined to become a central point of interest in the history of these times. His is a name not to be mentioned without respect and even reverence. Born in Boston in 1643, graduated at Harvard in 1662, and afterwards serving there as tutor and librarian, he became minister of Northampton in 1669, and there remained for sixty honored and fruitful years. His great dignity and holiness of character added power to his earnest preaching; in a time when the churches generally were languishing, his ministry was marked by

no less than five revivals. From such a man, a protest against excessive rigor in church administration came with peculiar weight. It is well to remember that it was in the year of his graduation at Harvard that the great synod was held at Boston, at which seventy "elders and messengers" of the churches did, "after much discussion and consideration from the Word of God," vote and conclude in favor of the Half-way Covenant. He was no novice, but a mature scholar of fifty-seven years, and a pastor for thirty-one successful years, when he published, in 1700, his "Doctrine of Instituted Churches." This was followed, nine years later, after not a little controversy, by his "Appeal to the Learned; being a vindication of the right of visible saints to the Lord's Supper, though they be destitute of a saving work of God's Spirit on their hearts." It requires an effort for us to apprehend the idea that sounds so paradoxical, of "visible saints" in "an unconverted

condition." We may be aided by reading one of the forms of this "half-way covenanting" in use in a Boston church:

You now from your heart professing a serious belief of the Christian religion, as it has generally been declared and embraced by the faithful in this place, do here give up yourself to God in Christ, promising with his help to endeavor to walk according to the rules of that holy religion all your days; choosing of God as your best good and your last end, and Christ as the Prophet and Priest and King of your soul forever. You do therefore submit unto the laws of his kingdom as they are administered in this church of his; and you will also carefully and sincerely labor after those more positive and increased evidences of regeneration which may further encourage you to seek an admission unto the table of the Lord.

There are few pastors at the present day who are not so far "Stoddardean" but that they would eagerly admit that one who could take this covenant intelligently and sincerely ought at once to be welcomed to the full communion of the church. One who would take it otherwise than sincerely,

ought not to be permitted to take it at all.

It grows clear, as we read, that the fathers of the New England churches, in their righteous reaction from the scandalous corruptness of the English parish churches, had set up an ultra-scriptural standard of church-membership, the consequences of which, in the third and fourth generations, were plaguing their successors. Their "platforms" and other manifestoes bristled with proof-texts and biblical phrases in italic type. But in their overzeal for church purity they had failed to put due emphasis on the parable of The Tares of the Field. They were bent upon keeping out the tares, at whatever risk to the wheat; and they had fixed a criterion of regenerate character, which might *seem* to serve, in an age of deep emotions, but failed in calmer times. The exacting of a recital of intimate spiritual experiences neither spared the wheat nor rooted out all the tares. Instead of

frankly abandoning it in favor of some more scriptural criterion, like "He that doeth righteousness is righteous," or "By their fruits ye shall know them," they clung to their "tradition of the elders" with the illogical and mischievous compromise, that one who was not prepared to pass their arbitrary "fencing of the table" might come halfway. The doctrine of Stoddard, instead of a further decline from the halfway covenant, was really, under an infelicitous statement, a return to sound principles.

As the sixty-years' pastorate of Stoddard drew towards its close, the church and parish of Northampton were sharing the generally prevalent inertness. High hopes were awakened when, in 1727, the grandson of the aged pastor was ordained as a colleague. Well might good men be hopeful at the coming of a young man of such rare promise as this Jonathan Edwards. In his home at the parsonage at East Windsor,

Connecticut, and in his boyhood at Yale College, where he graduated at seventeen, he had already manifested traits of genius in philosophy and of holiness in character which called forth the admiring question, What manner of man shall this be? After two years from his graduation passed at New Haven in theological study, he spent a few months in New York as minister to the feeble Presbyterian congregation lately gathered there, and then returned to Yale to serve for two years as tutor. Here, at her home in the New Haven parsonage, he won the love of Sarah Pierpont, a woman worthy of himself. The little prose-poem in which he describes to himself the spiritual beauties of her character is one of the points of the striking parallel between Edwards and Dante. The great Florentine's description of his Beatrice is not more tenderly beautiful. Edwards was twenty-four years old when he was ordained pastor of the Northampton church.

When, a few months later, he installed his "espousèd saint" in the parsonage at Northampton, the house became a well-spring of spiritual influences for the whole nation, the streams of which have never ceased to flow.

The newly inaugurated ministry made no break in the traditions of the church. Even the death of the venerable Stoddard, two years after he had laid his hands on the head of his grandson, does not seem to have led to any departure from his methods. It would have been little accordant with the mind of the young pastor, to refuse to any the comfort and help of the holy supper, on the ground of their non-compliance with conditions with which it was in no sense possible for them to comply. For six years his preaching of righteousness seemed as a voice crying in the wilderness. At length the faith and prayer of the preacher were rewarded by some signs of yielding to the word of God. The frivolity

or wantonness of the youth, that had vexed his righteous soul, began to be sobered. With deepening fervor he urged upon men's hearts the familiar themes, justification by faith, the awfulness of God's justice, the excellency of Christ, the duty of pressing into the kingdom of God. Presently a young woman, a leader in the village gayeties, became "serious, giving evidence of a heart truly broken and sanctified." It was the beginning of "The Great Awakening." The story of the revival cannot be better told than in the language of Edwards himself:

The work of God, as it was carried on and the number of true saints multiplied, soon made a glorious alteration in the town, so that in the spring and summer, anno 1735, the town seemed to be full of the presence of God. It was never so full of love nor so full of joy, and yet so full of distress, as it was then. There were remarkable tokens of God's presence in almost every house. It was a time of joy in families on the account of salvation's being brought unto them; parents rejoicing

over their children as being new-born, and husbands over their wives and wives over their husbands. The goings of God were then seen in his sanctuary. God's day was a delight, and his tabernacles were amiable. Our public assemblies were then beautiful; the congregation was alive in God's service, every one intent on the public worship, every hearer eager to drink in the words of the minister as they came from his mouth; the assembly in general were from time to time in tears while the Word was preached, some weeping with sorrow and distress, others with joy and love, others with pity and concern for the souls of their neighbors.

But the crown and glory of the work was when the thankful people presented themselves before the Lord with solemn acts of thanksgiving and vows of purity and faithfulness and charity in all the duties of daily life. By public covenant they consecrated themselves to the relative duties of parents and children, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, masters, mistresses and servants.

The work spread abroad through all the Connecticut Valley and the region round about. It was heard of in the region of Newark, planted by a New England colony, and of Elizabeth, where Jonathan Dickinson, a native of Hatfield, next town to Northampton, was the foremost man of New Jersey Presbyterianism; and the news, as it spread, quickened the churches with new life. Dr. Benjamin Colman of Boston wrote to Edwards for the facts in the case; and his reply, forwarded to Dr. Watts and Dr. Guyse, was published by them in London under the title, "Narrative of Surprising Conversions." The little book, carried by John Wesley in his pocket on a walk from London to Oxford, in 1738, opened his eyes to the vision of new possibilities for the kingdom of God. "Surely," he writes, "this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." That same year George Whitefield sailed for Georgia, to take up the work, in that infant colony, in

which his college friend, Wesley, had made so painful a failure.

The waters that had been stirred as by an angel did not return to their long wonted stagnation. Through the long seaboard from Maine to Georgia, there was a stir of expectant hope. In the autumn of 1740, on the invitation of Colman, Whitefield made a rapid progress through New England, preaching at every halt, spending three days at Newport, a fortnight in Boston, and three days at New Haven, and a few hours each at many other places. Never did apostle more literally fulfill the command, "as ye go, preach." And wherever he preached, he was thronged by eager, agitated, sometimes weeping and fainting congregations. No heart, it seemed, could resist the power of his incomparable eloquence. And yet some of those who "esteemed him most highly in love for his work's sake" recognized, with misgivings, the personal faults and the mistakes by

which his work was marred. His good sense and modesty were not proof against the adulations that everywhere waited on him. He was superstitiously inclined to be governed in his conduct by "impressions" assumed to be divine. He was prone to "beating his fellow-servants," his excessive self-conceit taking its common form of censoriousness in the judgment of others. He was much addicted to inveighing against other ministers as "unconverted," declaring in Boston, before a great assembly including many ministers, that "the generality of preachers talk of an unknown and unfelt Christ; and the reason why congregations have been so dead is because they have had dead men preaching to them." These were faults that were not slow in bringing their penalty. Imitated with aggravations by some of the associates and followers of the great preacher, who found it easier to copy his faults than his inimitable gifts, to what could they lead

but to disorder? Following close upon Whitefield's flying tour through New England, came Gilbert Tennent of New Jersey, whose abusive sermon on "An Unconverted Ministry" had just split the Presbyterian Church into two synods, of the Old Side and the New Side—a schism that was long in healing. The hysterical agitations, such as the sober wisdom of Edwards sought to hold under control, suffered no abatement under the fervid harangues of Tennent. For several months in the winter and spring of 1741, he continued his work at Boston, sustained by the confidence of some of the best men of the clergy. In Connecticut, several zealous pastors left their parishes for evangelizing tours from town to town, not waiting for invitations from the pastor in charge, but invading other men's parishes at their own discretion. It was impossible that such procedures, however conscientiously undertaken, should fail of giving offense. The

colonial legislature, which had ever an alacrity at meddling with church affairs, in 1741 summoned a "General Consociation" —the last Congregational Synod called by civil authority—to consult for "the true interest of vital religion." This council pronounced the opinion that no minister ought to preach or administer the sacraments in a parish not his own, without the consent of the settled minister of the parish. So obvious a principle of good manners failed to restrain the zeal of the itinerants; and the legislature followed it up with a law that a pastor leaving his flock to intrude uninvited into his neighbor's should lose his legal right to collect his salary, and be liable to be put under bonds for good behavior. Intruders from outside of the colony were liable to be expelled from within its borders.

Admitting (what at this day would be generally denied) the right of the government to interfere at all in such matters, it is

not difficult to find justification for the course that was taken by the legislature. If there was any value in the organization of the state into parishes each with its church and minister responsible for the care of its people, something must be done to prevent the parish system, inherited from the fathers, from being broken down by headstrong zealots breaking bounds at no call but that of an "impression" alleged to be divine. It was the mildest penalty that the case admitted, to signify to one quitting his own parish on a self-appointed mission to other men's parishes, that he must cease thereby to draw a salary for the work that he had ceased to do at home. If they should invade the parish of a neighbor minister with the implication or (as oftener happened) with the very explicit denunciation that he was a blind leader of the blind, it was not imposing an intolerable hardship that they should be required to give security for their decent and orderly conduct.

As for evangelists from abroad, their welcome had been so eager and so general, that the fact that one failed of being invited by some pastor would furnish a presumption against him as an adventurer not to be encouraged or entertained.

Evidently the new gospel was bringing not peace but a sword. In the controversy that was inevitably springing up, two protagonists were conspicuous. The work of Jonathan Edwards, "Some Thoughts concerning the present Revival of Religion in New England" (Boston, 1742) was answered the next year by Charles Chauncy, pastor of the First Church in Boston, in a volume the title of which bore a purposed resemblance to that which Edwards had used—"Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New England." It included widely collected and carefully authenticated instances of extravagance and fanaticism in the progress of the revival, with serious warnings of impending danger to the

churches. The debate entered into the conventions of ministers and into the discipline of colleges. It was at this time that David Brainerd was expelled from Yale College for indulging himself in the besetting sin of the revivalists, and saying of Tutor Whittelsey (a man of high Christian character, afterwards pastor of the New Haven church) "he has no more grace than this chair." The objectors to the methods of the "New Lights" were powerfully reinforced by the growing indiscretions of the itinerants. James Davenport, pastor at Southold, Long Island, was one of Whitefield's prime favorites. Surrendering himself to the control of "impressions" and "impulses" and Bible phrases "borne in upon his mind," he abandoned his Long Island parish, and went crusading through Connecticut and Massachusetts, thrusting himself uninvited into other men's labors, charging those who opposed him with being "unconverted" and with "leading

their people blindfold to hell," and adjuring the people to desert both pastor and church. Intent on schism, he came by invitation to New London to aid in organizing a Separatist church, and there "published the messages which he said he received from the Spirit in dreams and otherwise" and summoned the people with a "Thus saith the Lord" to put away the objects of their idolatry. Wigs, cloaks and breeches, hoods, gowns, rings, jewels and necklaces, were laid in a heap, on a Sunday afternoon, and publicly burned, with songs and shouts. In the pile were devotional books of such authors as Flavel, Beveridge and Increase Mather, and it was proclaimed to the crowd that "the smoke of the torment of such of the authors of the above-said books as died in the same belief as when they set them out was now ascending in hell, in like manner as they saw the smoke of these books arise." Such extravagances wrought a reaction and cured

themselves. In a little more than a year from this time, Davenport himself, who had been treated with much forbearance as not responsible for his actions, recovered his reason, with the restoration of his bodily health, and published a pathetic acknowledgment that he had been under the influence of a spirit of delusion which he had mistaken for the Spirit of truth. Men settled down into a more sober mind. Good men had been widely sundered in sentiment; and yet, on reconsideration, the difference was not extreme. The most zealous revivalists admitted that there had been deplorable excesses; the most cautious conservatives recognized that beneficent and divine work had been wrought. The hearts of alienated brethren flowed together, and soon no trace remained of the storm that had swept over New England, except a few languishing schisms in Connecticut country towns. Nevertheless the severe strain had revealed the fact of diverse

tendencies in opinion and taste and spiritual temperament, which were destined to have a most serious influence on the course of later history. Some of the lessons taught by the now subsided agitation were instructive to students of church polity. The most serious disorders had prevailed in regions where the semi-Presbyterian arrangements of the Saybrook Platform were looked to as a bulwark of good order. And the gravest schism that the Great Awakening occasioned—a complete rupture between "Old Side" and "New Side" that continued unhealed for eighteen years—took place under the compact classical government of the Presbyterian Church. In the looser tissue of the Congregational communion, the wounds healed by the first intention.

CHAPTER XI

GROWTH OF DOCTRINE

In the strength of the refreshment received in the few years of the Great Awakening, the churches of New England were to subsist for more than forty years. These were to be years not only of reaction from profound agitation and excitement, but also of exhausting wars, of political turmoil, and of the influx of anti-religious principles from abroad. But for the new and more abundant life that had been infused into them, the very existence of the churches might have been imperiled by these malign influences.

But they were not unfruitful years. The fervid missionary zeal of David Brainerd, commemorated in his biography by Jonathan Edwards, inspired with like zeal

Henry Martyn and a great company of men and women like-minded, on both sides of the sea. The faithfulness of many a parish church was rewarded by the ingathering of Indian converts. One of these, Samson Occum, educated for the ministry by Pastor Wheelock of Lebanon, gathered in England funds for that school for the training of Indian preachers which grew into Dartmouth College. In the twenty years from 1740, the number of the New England churches had been increased by one hundred and fifty.

Among the fruits of the Great Awakening must be reckoned that profound stirring of intellectual life that added to the American church polity which had grown up on the soil of New England, a distinctly American school of theology. It is most remarkable that in more than a hundred years of strenuous theologizing, among a people greatly addicted to free thought and speech, there should have been so little deviation

from the Reformed theology as articulated in the Westminster standards. But the revival had forced the adjudication of some questions with which these documents did not adequately deal. The Half-way Covenant and the "Stoddardean" discipline were illogical evasions of a difficulty that refused to be thus disposed of. They were an admission that conditions of salvation were exacted with which it was impossible to comply. The case required a new theodicy to "justify the ways of God to men." It was to this that the great founder of the New England theology, Edwards, applied those intellectual powers which have been the admiration of the world of thinkers and scholars. Not without mature meditation did he apply in practice the fruits of his study. For nearly twenty years he practised the system introduced into the Northampton church by his grandfather. Not until 1748 did he deliver his soul of a bold and open protest against any compromise

of the divine claim of repentance and faith as the inexorable condition of acceptance with God. To his mind and that of his successors, the solution of the "conflict of ages" was to be found in alleging the "power of contrary choice" and the distinction between natural and moral inability. Nothing but a deep conviction of the personal guilt of every man who should fail to comply with the demands of the gospel could possibly have sustained the soul of this most conscientious man in those lurid and Dantesque denunciations of divine vengeance against the impenitent and unbelieving with which he terrified the shrieking listeners in his Enfield sermon on "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." The subject of human duty, ability and responsibility cannot be followed far without opening, at the right hand and the left, into all the subjects of theological discussion. The themes of Edwards's own speculation ranged from heaven to hell. His disciples

and successors, a numerous series even counting only the most eminent, were linked together, from generation to generation, not only by the bond between teacher and scholar, but to a curious degree by the ties of family relation. The foremost of them, Hopkins and Bellamy, had been students in the family of Edwards. Smalley and Jonathan Edwards the younger were among the many students with Bellamy. Emmons studied under Smalley. Timothy Dwight was grandson of Edwards. Taylor was a favorite pupil of Dwight. Park was for a time a student of Emmons. The questions intently studied in one generation were taken up in the next for further elaboration. Thus grew up that body of literature known in America as the New England theology, and known and widely honored and accepted in other lands as the American theology.

Of course this great intellectual movement was not accomplished without colli-

sion of opposing minds. Serious and sometimes acrimonious debates took place. Not many were called to submit to so painful an experience as that of the great Jonathan Edwards. His resolute refusal to abate the conditions which he deemed scriptural and right in receiving candidates to the Lord's Supper provoked an angry hostility to him in the town to which his more than twenty years of ministry had been so noble a distinction and so great a blessing. Sorrowfully he laid down his work at the demand of a council ratified by an overwhelming vote of the church, and with his wife and eight of his living children withdrew to the perilous frontier of civilization in the Berkshire hills, where he served as missionary to the Stockbridge Indians. In this wilderness he wrote some of his masterpieces of metaphysical divinity. After seven years he was invited to be president of Princeton College, then lately founded by New England and "New Light" influence, in the interest of a

more advanced theology and a larger "liberty of prophesying" than were encouraged by the conservative orthodoxy of Harvard and Yale. Only a few weeks after his arrival at Princeton, he entered the pest-house to submit himself to inoculation for the smallpox, and there died in 1758, in his fifty-fifth year.

CHAPTER XII

AGE OF HOME MISSIONS

At the close of the war of independence, of all the colonial church establishments the only ones that survived in health and vigor were those of the Congregational polity. The Dutch and afterwards the English church in New York languished. Quakerism, in the Jerseys and Pennsylvania, was declining. The Anglican establishments from Maryland southward were as good as dead. In New England the solid organization of parish churches was coextensive with the settled population, and was still extending, as new regions came to be occupied. In the lapse of a century and a half, there had been changes in the order of the church polity. The early idea of the government of each church by an elective elder-

ship of not less than three had shrunk to an eldership of one, who was prone to arrogate to himself autocratic power. The purely democratic government of the towns, and the powerful current of popular opinion, aided the inevitable reaction towards government directly by the brotherhood of the church. The duties of the fellowship of churches, though sometimes conspicuously neglected, were so far from being laid aside, that they were defined and regulated by a growing body of precedents like a common law; or (in Connecticut) by a "platform" of ordinances—an infraction of the sovereignty of the individual congregation which some considered a less evil than the "unchartered freedom" that sometimes perpetuated a difficulty by setting up council against council. Successive controversies had arisen, resulting in some cases in there being two churches in the same town representing different sentiments or tastes; but it does not appear that churches had yet

begun to be established with the distinct intent of excluding some fellow-Christians. Doubtless (and not unreasonably) a candidate's "soundness in doctrine" was inquired into as being one of the indications of his fitness for membership in the church; but it was not with the purpose of making separations among Christians, but as one way of distinguishing between the church and the world. If a candidate, departing from what was considered (however mistakenly) as essential and fundamental truth, should express Arminian opinions, he might very probably be debarred from the communion; but it would not be with the notion that he might be an excellent Christian, only better suited to some "sister church," but rather that a man holding such views was no Christian at all; and that since (to quote the title of a pamphlet of the day) "heaven is shut against Arminians," it is no wrong if the church on earth is shut against them too, until they amend their sinful

errors. In short, the ideal of the New England churches (however imperfectly realized) was to be parish churches, each comprehending the Christian disciples of its parish. In theory and design, at least, they were not sectarian.

Here and there was a congregation of dissenters from the parish church. It is wonderful how few and inconsiderable they were—chiefly Quaker, Baptist and Episcopalian. The Separatist congregations organized during the commotion of the Great Awakening presently adopted Baptist principles, or coalesced harmoniously with the sisterhood of the Congregational churches about them. Naturally the organization of dissent led on both sides to the emphasizing of mutual distinctions, and to controversies which did not always do more harm than good.

In the extreme languor of the churches that followed the war of independence, they were providentially laden with a task of su-

preme importance, difficulty and dignity, well fitted to exercise all their remaining strength. The outward flow of the New England population had already begun, before the war, and there had been consultation among the Connecticut pastors about making provision for the "Green Mountain Boys" who were building their pioneer cabins in the wildernesses of Vermont. Immediately on the conclusion of peace, the business was resumed, the evangelizing tours of individual pastors being reinforced by and by with considerable companies, including some of the foremost men of the Connecticut clergy, detailed to this duty by the General Association.

In the adjustment of territorial claims arising out of the terms of the colonial charters, there had been allowed a Massachusetts Reserve in Western New York, and a Connecticut Reserve stretching across Northern Ohio; and towards these regions the first tidal wave of westward migration

was naturally determined. It presently grew to such dimensions that more systematic methods for more continuous work were demanded. In 1798 was organized the Missionary Society of Connecticut, "to Christianize the heathen of North America, and to support and promote Christian knowledge in the new settlements within the United States." This example was followed the next year in Massachusetts, and a few years later in New Hampshire, Vermont and Maine. The work thus organized was immediately occasioned by the movement of population; it was both effect and cause of that divine work of spiritual quickening at the opening of the nineteenth century, which has been characterized as The Second Awakening. Its influence extended from the seaboard to the remotest frontier of civilization, "and there was nothing hid from the heat thereof." In the ruder regions of the West, it was attended by extravagant symptoms of epidemic nervous

excitement. In New England the lessons painfully taught, two generations before, by the frenzy of poor James Davenport and his associates had not been forgotten. The people had well learned the apostolic distinction between godliness and bodily exercise. But everywhere the new revival was like life from the dead. At the accession of Timothy Dwight, in 1795, to the presidency of Yale College, demoralization and infidelity, in that institution, had reached nearly its lowest limit. The college church was almost extinct, and the students generally were ostentatiously infidel. As this declension was typical of the country generally, so was the recovery from it. There is an impressive absence from the story, of famous evangelists traversing the country on tours of preaching; everywhere men who had been "waiting for the consolation of Israel" were quick to answer to the first signs of new life. It was wonderful how soon and how completely the losses of the church

were made good. As the Great Awakening had been marked by the first American venture in religious journalism (the "Christian History" of Thomas Prince) so the present awakening of missionary zeal gave birth to the *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine* (1800) and the *Massachusetts Missionary Magazine* (1802). The generous enthusiasm of religious activity was destined to have the most important results, both direct and indirect, on the future of the Congregational churches of America.

The task imposed upon the churches of this period was notably different from that borne by the former generations. It was no longer that of tending the infancy of homogeneous communities on their own soil, under the tutelage of their own government, and of seeing them equipped with the institutions of a Christian civilization. Their brethren and neighbors, embarking in their canvas-covered wagons, had gone further from home, so far as concerned means of

communication, than the fathers who had crossed the sea to be the founders of a new nation. And in their new wilderness they were not alone. Another stream of migration was flowing westward on parallel lines, and often debouching into the same channels with that from New England. This was the Scotch or Irish Presbyterian migration, so nearly similar to the New Englanders, but not identical. These emigrants also were followed into the wilderness by the pastoral care of missionaries of their own sort.

In these circumstances there were three possible courses to be taken: either one party or the other might surrender its preferences and accept the regimen of the other; or the two parties might set up rival churches in the same village; or some plan might be formed by which, in the same community, they might agree in common worship and Christian service. Many influences tended to this last course. In colonial days,

there had been systematic consultation between the Presbyterian Church (then a small and uninfluential body) and the General Association of Connecticut, regarding measures to be taken to ward off the very real and formidable danger that a hierarchy of lord-bishops backed by the canon law—a yoke which neither they nor their fathers had been able to bear—would be imposed upon the colonies by crown and parliament. After the close of the war of independence, the General Assembly had gladly availed itself of the eminent qualifications of Dr. Dwight to secure a book of psalms and hymns suited to churches of both communions. To a remarkable extent their clergy had been manned from New England. The Association and the Assembly were in the habit annually of exchanging delegates; and at the Assembly's request these "corresponding members" were given, in each body, equal power with its own members. So it came to pass, in 1800,

that Jonathan Edwards the younger, a theologian hardly inferior to his illustrious father, long a Connecticut pastor, and now president of Union College at Schenectady, was sitting in the General Association of Connecticut as delegate of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. He was a representative of both parties, or rather a representative of those interests of the kingdom of Christ in the West which were the common concern of both parties. He served on a committee to prepare a "plan of union" on which mixed communities of Congregationalists and Presbyterians might carry on their church affairs together without schism. The next year in May, he was chairman of a like committee in the General Assembly. His report was adopted; and the next month it was also adopted in Connecticut. This was "The Plan of Union." It provided that a Presbyterian church might be served by a Congregational minister, and *vice versa*, and

that a congregation including members of each persuasion might conduct its affairs by means of a standing committee. It was a studiously equitable arrangement, the practical value of which in advancing the Christianization of the new States is denied by none. It saved many a community from being ravaged by schism. It greatly honored the essential principle of Congregationalism, to wit, that a community of Christians has a right to manage its own affairs even though it may see fit to manage them in the Presbyterian way; at the same time it disallowed the Separatist claim of the right of a party to rend itself from the community when affairs are not managed according to its own mind. And it largely infused the spirit of self-respect and self-government into many congregations included under the Presbyterian hierarchy, and influenced the American development of the system itself.

But the practical working of the Plan of Union was to attach a very large propor-

tion, not only of the mixed congregations but of those made up mainly from New England, to the Presbyterian Church. The reasons for this were not far to seek. To begin with, the Congregationalists of that day had no aversion to the Presbyterian polity. The ministers of Connecticut, organized on the Saybrook Platform, openly declared, and with much justice, that their system was rather Presbyterian than Congregational; and the purpose of the most eminent of the Massachusetts clergy to establish a like system there had been averted only by the fiery appeal of John Wise to the growing spirit of democracy and independence. Further, the methods of the Presbyterian advance, in which the presbytery is logically antecedent to the congregation, gave much advantage, in priority of organization, over the method which begins with the congregation, leaving the wider organization to follow at its convenience. The missionaries from New England found

at hand opportunities of fraternal fellowship in the presbytery, and were often content to remain in it. Withal, the organization of civil government, in the earlier West, on the county as a unit, instead of the pure democracy of the town-meeting, naturally tended to the analogous organization of the church. But above all these reasons it would be unjust not to commemorate with due honor the generous magnanimity with which the pilgrims of this new exodus, pastors and people alike, consented to sacrifice personal preferences and cherished usages and traditions, to the interests of the kingdom of heaven.

It has been estimated that "the Plan of Union has transformed over two thousand churches which were in origin and usages Congregational, into Presbyterian churches." One's judgment of the policy that had such a result will naturally be affected by his point of view. To the zealous propagandist, eager to belong to a big sect, it must

seem nothing less than "disastrous"—the work of "the Lord's silly people." Others will reckon it among the highest honors of a sect which in many ways has been nobly distinguished in the service of the Church Catholic, that it was capable of so heroic an act of self-abnegation. There are some competitions in which the honors and the ultimate rewards of victory belong to the defeated party.

CHAPTER XIII

DISRUPTION

SIMULTANEOUSLY with these widely extensive labors of the Congregationalists outside of New England, revolutionary agitations and changes were taking place among the churches in the most ancient seats of our Puritan and Pilgrim Christianity. And the immediate occasion of these agitations was found in that same revival of religion which had inspired the apostolic self-denial and the earnest missionary zeal manifested in the pioneer work at the West. The divergent tendencies that had revealed themselves during and after the Great Awakening, in the controversy in which Jonathan Edwards and Charles Chauncy were the protagonists, reappeared with emphasis. They represented the difference of temperament and taste be-

tween the more eager and zealous, and the more sober and critical but not necessarily less earnest. They represented a difference of judgment in church administration, especially on the much debated point of the conditions of admission to the Christian sacraments. Naturally also they represented a widening difference of theological conviction. The "Improvements in Theology made by President Edwards" and enforced by his powerful reasoning and his lofty character had been by no means unanimously accepted by the New England pastors. And now that remarkable dynasty of theologians who (as his son phrased it) had "followed his course of thought," had gone on to the third generation, adding new principles, and making new refinements and wider applications. Identifying themselves with earnest movements for the advancement of religion at home or afar, and much engaged in the training of students for the ministry, the leaders of the new the-

ology soon became conscious of a growing influence that might easily seem to warrant a tone of authority natural enough, but not conciliatory to the slower-moving and more cautious minds that held to the early forms of theological statement. There was nothing like schism either in or among the churches. But the two schools of opinion known as Old Calvinist and Hopkinsian were drawing apart from each other, and a dividing line might presently have been drawn between them, but for the emerging into plain view of another element in the life of the Congregational churches, which was destined, both by action and by reaction, to exert a profound and even revolutionary influence on Congregationalism.

In the year 1787, the old Episcopalian church of King's Chapel in Boston declared itself Unitarian, amended its prayer-book accordingly and inducted into its ministry James Freeman, a man of avowed Unitarian principles. Thus "the first Episcopalian

church in New England became the first Unitarian church in America." It compelled attention to a fact which for many years had been no secret from any who chose to observe it, that throughout this part of New England there was a deep and frankly uttered dissent, not only from the extreme statements of the later Hopkinsians, but from the general system of doctrine which, as set forth in the Westminster standards, had not indeed been imposed as a test, but in repeated declarations of earlier date had been referred to as expressing the common belief of the churches. Among the dissidents were two eminent men who died in that same year 1787 which witnessed the ordination of Freeman at King's Chapel: one was Ebenezer Gay, for nearly seventy years pastor at Hingham; the other was Charles Chauncy, the antagonist of Edwards on the subject of the Revival, who for sixty years was pastor of the First Church in Boston. Much younger than either of these, though his

brief and brilliant career closed more than twenty years earlier, was Jonathan Mayhew, of the West Church in Boston, distinguished not only for his captivating eloquence, but for the large latitude of his theological opinions and his aggressive and defiant way of enunciating them. A fourth name to be added is that of Jeremy Belknap. In that same notable year, 1787, he came from Dover, New Hampshire, where he had been for twenty years pastor, to be the first Congregational minister of the Federal Street Church, which up to that date had been Presbyterian. His theological position was defined by his publishing a hymn-book from which all recognition of the Trinity or the supreme deity of Christ had been eliminated.

The thing chiefly remarkable in the theological situation illustrated in these conspicuous instances is not the fact of a somewhat prevalent departure from the standards of a previous generation. The like depar-

ture is characteristic of the time both in the Old England and in the New. The wonder is that in an age of strenuous theological disputation it should have excited so little debate, and led to no rupture of fellowship. It certainly was not unnoticed. The men who have been named were of the highest eminence, and in eminent positions; and their opinions were distinctly understood. But, not without mutual anxieties and jealousies, the various parties kept together in one fellowship of churches and ministers, in which relations of sincere respect and warm personal friendship stretched across the theological dividing lines.

But schism was inevitable. It is not altogether strange that the first church to go asunder was the old Pilgrim church at Plymouth. When the church by a majority and the parish by an overwhelming vote had determined on the settlement of a minister of "liberal" sympathies, it was wholly in accordance with the Separatist traditions of

Plymouth that the dissatisfied minority, numbering almost one-half of the communicant members, should secede "without tarrying for any." This they did, in October, 1801, setting up at the entrance of the new church a dogmatic test intended to exclude Unitarians. The old church remained on the basis of the original church covenant.

This was a preliminary and local skirmish. The tug of war began two years later, when the chair of theology in Harvard College fell vacant by the death of Professor Tappan. On the choice of his successor the parties joined issue. The corporation was equally divided, and the question hung long in the balance. At last the balance turned in favor of the "Liberal" candidate, the greatly respected Henry Ware, pastor at Hingham. This election, and three others of like complexion which soon followed, announced unmistakably to the two "evangelical" parties that the influence of the college was

thenceforth committed to the opposite side. It was a painful and disheartening blow to those who cherished the doctrinal traditions of the New England churches. But there were severer blows to follow.

The immediate consequence of seating the Unitarian candidate in the chair of theology at Harvard (it took place in 1805) was the founding of Andover Theological Seminary. With wonderful promptness the two "evangelical" parties, the Old Calvinist and the Hopkinsian, composed their serious differences and united their resources, and in September, 1808, the new Seminary, the first in Protestant America, was opened, with thirty-six students. For thirty years from that time, the annual average of entering students was sixty-two. The Seminary was the mighty pioneer in that work of the systematic and thorough training for the ministry in which, both in their own seminaries and by the service of their sons in the seminaries of other sects, the American Con-

gregationalists have held an unquestioned preeminence.

The two antagonist parties were now strongly intrenched at Cambridge and Andover. Each had its monthly organ published in Boston, the Liberal *Anthology* and the Orthodox *Panoplist.* Each was eagerly desirous to place its best men in positions of influence. The accession to the Liberal pulpit of Boston of two such splendidly gifted youths as Channing at Federal Street and Buckminster at the Brattle Church was inadequately offset by the settlement of Joshua Huntington at "the Old South" and of the demonstratively and aggressively orthodox John Codman at the Second Church in Dorchester. It was on the occasion of his settlement that Mr. Codman announced his purpose to draw a line of distinction in matters of professional courtesy among his neighbors of the opposing schools of opinion—an announcement which came near to costing him his place. But at this date

(1808) so far were the parties from a rupture of fellowship, that at the installation of Huntington the protagonists, Morse and Channing, took part together in the public services, and at the installation of Codman Channing preached the sermon.

But it was impossible that the form of fellowship could long continue. The tension was such that so small a matter as a pamphlet could start a rent that should run through the entire fabric. Dr. Jedediah Morse of Charlestown supplied the pamphlet, under the title: "American Unitarianism; or A Brief History of the Progress and Present State of the Unitarian Churches in America." It consisted of extracts from letters from Mr. Freeman of King's Chapel that had been published in England in a "Life of the Rev. Theophilus Lindsey," a deceased Unitarian minister in London. The three points of offense in the pamphlet (for it was meant to be offensive) were these: that it gave the impression, (1), that

there had been a covert conspiracy to draw away the New England churches from their faith; (2), that the leaders of New England Liberalism had been guilty of dishonest evasion and concealment of their principles; (3), that they were in sympathy with the highly unpopular theological tenets of the Rev. Joseph Priestley, leader of the English Socinians. The imputations were all of them unjust and outrageous. But they answered their purpose of infusing additional acrimony into a controversy that needed no such intensifying. The war of journals, pamphlets and books waxed hotter and hotter.

And now the schism went on apace. As in the days of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the cry was, "To your tents, O Israel." At least, this was the cry of the Orthodox party, who were bent on forcing the fight. The time had arrived which Increase Mather foresaw and deprecated, when men would seek to "gather churches out of churches."

In cases where the church, being Orthodox, found itself sustained by a majority, however scanty, of the parish, no question need be raised. When the Orthodox church found itself opposed by the Liberal parish, it was advised to insist on its right of initiative in the choice of a pastor, or (fatal counsel, as it proved!) to separate from the parish and organize a new "ecclesiastical society" for the care of its temporalities. The case of a Liberal church with an Orthodox parish does not seem to have occurred. In case of a parish asserting its Liberal sympathies with the consent or acquiescence of the church, persons of Orthodox convictions were strenuously urged to "come out of Babylon" and connect themselves with some distinctly Orthodox church —a counsel by no means universally followed.

For twenty years the schism went on rending and tearing, disturbing the peace of towns, churches and families. A nota-

ble and in some respects exceptional instance is that of Dedham, which gave occasion for "the Dedham decision" found in volume xvi of the Massachusetts Reports. In 1818, "in that town, the majority of the church members being Evangelical, the society, *i. e.*, the legal voters of the First Parish of Dedham, who were preponderatingly Unitarian, took the initiative and, in spite of the protests of two-thirds of the church, called the Rev. Alvan Lamson as their minister, and invited a council of Unitarians to ordain him." The council, which included some of the foremost men of the Unitarian clergy and laity, consented to take this course, so utterly without justification in either principle or usage. The church now withdrew from the residuary minority that adhered to the parish. Hereupon arose the legal question, which part of the now divided church was the First Church in Dedham. The case being carried to the Supreme Court of the State, it was decided

that the parish church is the church that is connected with the parish—that the State recognizes no church as having any legal status except in connection with some regularly constituted society—that if the entire church should withdraw, it would thereby lose its existence, and a church which might afterwards be organized in the parish would succeed to the name and property of the seceded church.

"The Dedham decision" had a sweeping application. According to a reckoning afterwards made from the Orthodox point of view, forty-six churches were "driven from their houses of worship by town or parish votes or by measures equivalent to such votes" while thirty-five others had been "constrained in conscience to secede as individuals and form distinct churches." On the other hand not less than thirty-nine churches including some of the most venerable and influential, while protesting against the separation that was forced for con-

science' sake by the Orthodox party, freely took their position on the Liberal side. In Boston one only of the old churches, the "Old South," remained to the Orthodox party, so complete had been the change. Boston "awoke and found itself Arian." From this point forwards the Story of the Congregationalists is divided into two streams.

CHAPTER XIV

UNITARIANISM

NEVER in all the course of church history has a new religious movement started with so magnificent a send-off as this of the Boston Unitarians. Granting the strength of its theological position, no element of strength beside seemed lacking to it. It numbered 125 churches, by far the greater part of which were in the region of Boston. Nine out of the ten churches of Boston adhered to it. Of the twenty-five first churches founded in Massachusetts, about twenty, beginning with the Pilgrim church of Plymouth, were Unitarian. The venerable College at Cambridge was under its control. Church buildings and productive funds for religious uses amounting, it was estimated, to $600,000 were in its posses-

sion. The wealth, culture and social influence of Boston were Unitarian. The great offices of the State were held by Unitarians. The Unitarian clergy-list was such a roster of splendid names as no clergy of like numbers in Christendom could show. Neither were its graces those alone of learning and rhetoric, although in these it was greatly distinguished; the more spiritual graces of charity towards man and piety towards God were, in many a beautiful instance, illustrated in saintly lives. There was much to justify the prophecy that was uttered, that Unitarianism would presently become the prevailing form of American Christianity.

The theology represented by Channing and his friends was a lofty and reverent Arianism. Its methods were scrupulously biblical; indeed as compared with their antagonists, it might not be unjust to say that they were the more biblist of the two, and the latter the more rationalist. The

strength—and the weakness—of the new movement lay not so much in its theology (using the word strictly) as in its anthropology. Its reaction from commonly accepted forms of statement as to human depravity and impotence was violent. The command "honor all men" was obeyed from the heart. If its preachers were led thereby to adopt a weak tenet of "the rectitude of human nature," they suffered the consequence of a loss of grip on the average conscience, and the substitution of culture for conversion.

The Unitarians were charged with having departed from the doctrine of the Fathers of New England. It was true. So, in a less degree and by more gradual deflections, had their accusers. But to claim that they had ceased to be Congregationalists was (and is) preposterous. The old churches of Boston and the neighborhood, in their old meeting-houses, under their regularly settled, recognized and approved pastors,

without change of rule or organization, were going forward without other interruption than that some of their members had voluntarily withdrawn. The departure from Congregational principles was not when the Unitarians, to their regret, were left by themselves in the old churches; but when the retiring members organized themselves into distinctively and exclusively partisan churches, sometimes under expressly sectarian names, as "Calvinistic" or "Trinitarian," with tests intended to debar their late fellow-members from fellowship.

In logic and in conscience the residuary parish church, holding the name and the privilege and the prestige of the old town-church, and its meeting-house, and its funds for the maintenance of the minister, ought to have assumed the duties and responsibilities of the parish church, holding itself "debtor to every man" in the parish, except as some persons had discharged it

of the debt by committing themselves to other spiritual care. It was an immense opportunity that lay before these churches at the critical time when immigration was just beginning and the change from rural to village and city life was impending. It does not appear that they ever apprehended the duties involved in the privileges so lavishly bestowed on them. Perhaps no churches have shown less sense of responsibility for the population of a given precinct, than these old parish churches. That there were nobly generous men among them, and men possessed of an "enthusiasm of humanity," is abundantly demonstrated, as by the "ministry at large" founded by Dr. Tuckerman, and other good works. But in general these churches, both in city and in country, were inactive and unenterprising.

Without attempting to determine in what degree this fault is to be referred to defects of theology, it is easy to recognize in it the debilitating effect of the initial successes.

The new sect (for such, by no consent of its own, it had come to be) had won two Pyrrhic victories: it had taken control of Harvard College; and it had come into possession, by a judicial decision that filled the "exiled" churches with an undying sense of injustice, of names and records and church-buildings and funds, that kept them very much "at ease in Zion." The movement was strangely sterile. It started in 1815 with 125 churches, of which 100 were in Massachusetts. Thirty-three years later it numbered 201; and fifteen years after that it numbered 205. In the last forty years, more earnest efforts at the propagation of the sect have not been without result.

The real fruits of the Unitarian movement do not admit of tabulation, and they are very far from insignificant. The fact, indeed, that the list of eminent names in American literature is so largely a catalogue of Unitarians cannot be confidently alleged as a fruit of the "ism." But the narrowest

sectarian prejudice against this order of the Congregational churches need not hesitate to recognize, not only the noble contributions which it has made to great social reforms, but also the salutary degree in which the principles and temper of Unitarian Christianity have pervaded the literature and even the theology of the American church in general, including those parts of it which are least conscious of any such influence.

Within the prescribed limits of this volume, the history of this separation—the secession of the Orthodox from the Unitarians—can be told only with the utmost brevity. Two incidents however demand mention. The first was the rise of the Transcendentalists. They represented the reaction, in the minds of thoughtful men, from that sensational philosophy of Locke and his Scotch successors which had so long been exclusively dominant in America. Its first recognized entrance into church affairs was when, in 1832, the young pastor

of the Second Church in Boston, Mr. Ralph Waldo Emerson, startled his congregation by proposing to abandon the observance of the Lord's Supper. He did not find it interesting, he said. When the church demurred at this modest demand, he retired to his literary seclusion at Concord, not, however, without treating his congregation, at parting, with an elaborate argument against its use of the sacrament. The old-style "Channing Unitarians," always reverent towards the Scriptures and the person of Christ, found much to offend them in the oracles with which the young philosopher emerged each autumn upon the lecture-platform. And when, in 1838, he delivered his address to the Graduating Class of the Harvard Divinity School, they were more than offended, they were shocked, at what seemed to them nothing better than pantheism. It was "atheism disguising itself under a preposterous name," said one. Prof. Andrews Norton, eminent for his

learning in the Scriptures and his defense of their authority, denounced the new teaching as "the latest form of infidelity," and Prof. Henry Ware, Jr., felt constrained in spirit to preach, in reply, in the college chapel, a sermon which he sent to Mr. Emerson with a friendly letter, and received in return an exasperatingly flippant answer.

The war of pamphlets thus joined was still raging when a new combatant entered the field. Theodore Parker, in an ordination sermon preached in 1841, on "The Transient and Permanent in Christianity," boldly challenged, in the startling and defiant way in which he delighted, that whole system of the defense of the gospel from history and miracle on which Channing and his associates had been accustomed to rely. "The foundations were destroyed, and what should the righteous do?" Something must needs be done; and yet process for heresy was hardly suited to the antecedents of Unitarianism. But practically, by general

consent, Parker found himself outside of the fellowship of the Unitarian ministry. Parker was not the man to shrink from the controversy thus invited. His position was reasserted with emphasis in his volume (1842) of "Discourse of Matters Pertaining to Religion;" and in his translation of De Wette's "Introduction to the Old Testament" the most alarming results of German criticism were commended not only to the learned but to the popular mind. Instead of his country pulpit in Roxbury, he mounted the platform of the largest concert-hall in Boston, and became the most popular preacher in the city, while all over the land he was heard as a lyceum lecturer. It is an impressive illustration of the swift current of modern thought, that many of the opinions for which Parker was disfellowshipped as a heretic by the Unitarians in 1844, came, before the end of the century, to be discussed as open questions among theologians

of unquestioned standing in orthodox communions.

When, after the close of the civil war, the Unitarians began to get together for an aggressive campaign, it became obvious that among the newer churches organized by new men, many of them recruited from other denominations and reacting violently from their former principles, the tide was setting vehemently towards an extreme radicalism. "The Western Issue" drawn between those who insisted on holding to the name of Christian, and those who wished to reject it in favor of some statement of "absolute religion," was so sharp that it would have split the denomination if this had been big enough to split. It was finally settled by the unanimous adoption, at the National Conference in 1894, of this declaration:

"These churches accept the religion of Jesus, holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed

up in love to God and love to man. The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore it declares that nothing in this constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

CHAPTER XV

AFTER THE DISRUPTION

AFTER the disruption of the two parties of the New England Congregationalists, in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, as soon as the smoke and dust of a most acrimonious controversy were a little blown away, it was for the Orthodox seceders at Boston to look about them and reckon up their losses. There was cause for both dismay and congratulation. Immediately about them the ruin was almost complete. The college was gone; and nearly all the old churches, with their venerable name and history, and their buildings and funds and legal privileges. Young Harriet Beecher (name afterwards illustrious) coming to Boston with her father in 1826, afterwards

wrote her impressions of the situation in these words: "All the literary men of Massachusetts were Unitarian. All the trustees and professors of Harvard College were Unitarians. All the élite of wealth and fashion crowded Unitarian churches. The judges on the bench were Unitarian, giving decisions by which the peculiar features of church organization, so carefully ordained by the Pilgrim fathers, had been nullified. . . . The dominant majority entered at once into possession of churches and church property, leaving the orthodox minority to go out into schoolhouses or town halls, and build their churches as best they could."

On the other hand, the area of the Unitarian movement was singularly limited. One of its own historians (Professor Allen) has thus defined it: "A radius of thirty-five miles from Boston as a centre would sweep almost the whole field of its history and influence. Outside of this,

twelve or fifteen churches lay in a belt a little to the north, running as far back as to the Connecticut River; while the important towns of Portland, Portsmouth, Worcester, Providence, and New Bedford made its frontier stations. Baltimore and Charleston were distant outposts, established in 1817; New York and Springfield were added to the list in this very year."

The rest of New England was hardly affected, except indirectly, by the controversy which had so convulsed the region of Boston. Everywhere else the churches stood true to the doctrinal system which, not without modifications in transmission, they had inherited from the fathers—more staunchly true, in fact, for the questions that had been debated. In Connecticut, the almost total failure of Unitarianism to make any lasting impression may be ascribed in part to the "consociation" system with its conservative influence; but quite as much to the fact that its orthodoxy

was represented by the recognized leadership, not of extreme dogmatists of the somewhat domineering Hopkinsian dynasty, but by so commanding a personality and so genuinely liberal a teacher as President Dwight of Yale College. In the loss of Harvard, the Orthodox party found consolation in the growing influence of Yale, and in the younger institutions of Dartmouth (1769), Williams (1793), Bowdoin (1794), and Middlebury (1800), while Amherst was about to begin, in 1821, its distinguished and eminently evangelical career. But especially reassuring was the effective work of Andover Theological Seminary (1808) sending out each year fifty or sixty recruits for the evangelical ministry so trained and equipped for their work as never young ministers had been before since the apostolic era. The noble success of this foundation inspired men to the imitation of it at Bangor (1816) and at New Haven (1822). Meanwhile Harvard was

languishing, not only in its theological work, but in all its work, through a widespread mistrust as to its religious influence.

While the Unitarian Congregationalists succeeded, in Boston and its neighborhood, to the property and prestige and easy dignity of the establishment, their Orthodox brethren had settled into the attitude of a dissenting sect, with the good qualities incidental to such organizations, and "the faults of its qualities." With conscientious zeal, as serving the Lord, they devoted themselves to the work of "gathering churches out of churches," to eager polemic attacks upon the opposite party, and to the organization of a propaganda for the principles which they sincerely identified with the interests of the kingdom of heaven.

The acceptance of this attitude, necessitated, perhaps, by the situation, was favored by the dominant, not to say domineering influence, in that region, of a very remarka-

ble and interesting and typical character, Nathanael Emmons, for fifty-four years pastor of Franklin, educator in theology of a hundred ministers, voluminous author of sermons and theological treatises. He was the ideal New England theologian, who could "look for an hour at the point of a needle without winking," and spend fourteen such hours daily in his study. He was reverenced by those who knew him well, for his ascetic sanctity; and impartial critics have admired not only the closeness of his reasoning, but the fervid earnestness of his sermons. Neither was he so rapt in celestial contemplations as to lose sight of earthly affairs. He was actively interested in missionary enterprises and in public reforms and in the ethical aspects of civil politics. It is not strange that this vindicator of the autocratic sovereignty of God should find little to approve in the doctrinaire democracy of Thomas Jefferson, whom he picturesquely characterized, in a famous sermon, as "Jer-

oboam the son of Nebat which made Israel to sin."

Oddly enough, in passing from civil polity to ecclesiastical, he seems to have parted with his "iron logic" and his grammar, and also with his principles. For his "Scriptural Platform of Ecclesiastical Government" (1826—some later editions have been "doctored") is a piece of low-grade "social-compact" Jacobinism, fallaciously argued and blunderingly expressed. A church, according to this "platform," is a club the members of which are bound to such mutual duties as they may have agreed upon. It is "essential" to the club, as "to every voluntary society, to admit whom they please into their number," and to rule out or blackball whom they please. This is the working basis on which the organization of the seceding churches of Eastern Massachusetts proceeded; and the principle which it illustrated, though not adopted in articulate form, proceeding, nevertheless, from so in-

fluential a centre as Boston, has had a wide and pernicious vogue in American church history.

The first step taken in Boston towards retrieving the painful losses of the Orthodox party, was taken with wisdom and energy. The most commanding position in the city was secured, at the corner of the Common, and a noble building erected, to be the home of the newly organized "Park Street Church." This organization was effected in 1809, while the rupture between the parties was yet incomplete. But the manner of it left no room for doubt as to the purpose of the enterprise. The members declared their acceptance of the Westminster Shorter Catechism and of the Savoy Confession, and then added a creed of their own, drawn out in many articles, to be used as a test for the exclusion of applicants for membership who might be otherwise minded. It was to be frankly and expressly a sectarian church. This was not the first

instance of this departure from the Congregational usage which was still faithfully cherished by the old parish churches; but it was doubtless the most conspicuous and influential instance. The Andover students would naturally take it as an object-lesson in church administration, and apply it as the normal method, at remote points. Mr. Joel Hawes, coming, in 1818 from Andover to the ancient church of Thomas Hooker at Hartford, persuaded the church to set aside the ancient covenant that had been in use from time immemorial, and substitute an elaborate code of doctrine in eleven articles, to which candidates for membership were required to give publicly their "cordial assent." Through the New England missionaries the novel usage spread into the Presbyterian Church; and Scotchmen who had been accustomed to seeing the elders sworn into office by the Westminster standards were surprised to find the like dogmatic tests applied to the tender

souls of neophytes at their first communion.

The Park Street meeting-house came to be a sort of cathedral church to the Orthodox Congregationalists. From Andover came Prof. Edward Dorr Griffin, a thunderbolt of theologic war, who in 1811, resigned his professorship to become pastor of the church, and in a course of Sunday evening lectures, afterwards published, set forth his convictions of truth in the most uncompromising, not to say extreme manner. It was sermons like that included in his published works, "On the Use of Real Fire in Hell," that won for the church the popular title of "Brimstone Corner," and gave point to the practical comment of some irreverent hearer who sifted a train of flowers of sulphur from the church door to the door of the parsonage. In like spirit did Dr. Edward Payson, with what he doubtless deemed to be a holy boldness, propound his doctrine of human

nature, that "by nature man is, in stupidity and insensibility, a block; in sensuality and sottishness, a beast, and in pride, malice, cruelty and treachery, a devil." It is easy to believe (what indeed can be proved) that preachers whose teaching concerning human nature was in such terms, were not incapable of speaking of the divine nature in such a way as to justify the charge of tritheism so freely made against them, and so indignantly repelled.

Thus on both sides of the dividing line, appeared some of the unhappy results of the great schism. The two wings of the noble brotherhood of the New England churches had gone asunder, and each wing by itself made a somewhat wobbling flight. If (as we have seen) the left wing bore away perilously in the direction of unbelief, the right wing was swaying towards forms of over-believing and misbelieving hardly less pernicious. Happily for those whose dangers lay in this direction, the polemic

excesses of some near the storm-centre were in a way to be held in check by the good sense of their brethren more remote from the agitations and exasperations of controversy.

Not less happily new and inspiring duties now emerged, lifting their hearts into a freer and serener atmosphere than that of the local contentions in which they were all the time tempted to waste their strength in "beating their fellow-servants."

Among the fairest fruits of the Second Awakening at the opening of the nineteenth century was the little company of Williams College students that was wont to meet beside a haystack in a secluded meadow, to pray for the conversion of the world to Christ. In 1810, the third year of the Seminary at Andover, came these young graduates of Williams, Samuel John Mills, Luther Rice, Gordon Hall, and James Richards, their hearts all aglow with a generous spirit of self-sacrifice for the kingdom of heaven.

Their noble enthusiasm infected their fellow-students, and Adoniram Judson from Brown University, Samuel Newell from Harvard and Samuel Nott from Union were added to the number of "The Brethren" committed to personal service as missionaries to the heathen. They applied for advice to the General Association of Massachusetts, then lately organized for ministerial fellowship to the exclusion of the Liberals, and by this body measures were taken that resulted in the organization, at the house of Noah Porter of Farmington, in 1810, of the "American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions." In the face of serious discouragements the first five missionaries from America to a foreign country, Judson, Newell, Nott, Hall and Rice, were sent to India. The fact that two of the five, Judson and Rice, shortly after landing, announced their conscientious adoption of Baptist principles, however disheartening at first, fell out wonderfully to

the furtherance of the gospel; for it was not only the beginning of Judson's apostolic mission to Burmah, but it led to the committing of the Baptist denomination to the enterprise of missions which it has prosecuted with honorable success.

The American Board has been the parent, directly or indirectly, of all American missions in heathen lands. The nine commissioners from Massachusetts and Connecticut, of whom it originally consisted, soon added to their number representatives of the Presbyterian and Dutch churches, and the Board continued to be the channel of missionary activity for both these denominations until, after many years, they constituted their separate organizations. The catalogue of its missions is a roll of honor splendidly adorned with the names of confessors and martyrs, and with the record not only of heroic endeavor but of successful achievement.

The spirit of organization for beneficence

on a national or ecumenical scale possessed the Congregational churches at this period. A striking exemplification of the large-minded and unselfish way in which the business was done is found in the institution at Boston, in 1815, of the Education Society for furnishing recruits for the ministry. Its benefactions were to be widely diffused, and representatives of other denominations, including Bishop Griswold of the Episcopal Church, were in the list of officers. It ceased to be servant of all the churches only when other churches preferred to serve themselves. As early as 1814, a religious Tract Society was founded at Andover, afterwards transferred to Boston, and becoming transfigured into the American Tract Society, and at last merged with one of the same name in New York, attained to wide influence. There have been many to grieve that the Congregational churches should have spent their strength in furnishing and circulating literature "ac-

ceptable to all evangelical Christians," while other sects were energetically pushing the literature favoring their several pretensions; and there have been not a few to congratulate themselves on belonging to a fellowship capable of such honorable self-abnegation.

When the first party of five missionaries sailed for India by way of the Cape of Good Hope, Mills, the foremost of the brotherhood, found himself bound in spirit to go in the opposite direction. With one companion, commissioned by the Connecticut Missionary Society, he set out on an adventurous journey of missionary exploration through the unknown Southwest as far as New Orleans, preaching, distributing Bibles, and founding churches and Bible Societies. Insatiable of toil and hardship, he started two years later (1814) on a second tour through the same region, preaching at St. Louis the first Protestant sermon that had been heard west of the Mississippi, and with protracted labor organizing the First

Presbyterian Church in that Roman Catholic town—the mother of many Presbyterian churches manned, under the Plan of Union, by Congregational pastors sustained by the Missionary Society of Connecticut. Out of the labors of Mills, and the reports which he brought home with him, came the merger of several local Bible societies in the American Bible Society, 1816.

In his long horseback journeys through the wilderness the prophetic soul of this young man had ample time to ponder an even bolder project of evangelic enterprise, which, however, was not original with himself. Nearly fifty years before, Samuel Hopkins and his erudite neighbor at Newport, Ezra Stiles, had actually begun collecting money to be applied to the educating of Christian negroes in America, and sending them forth as missionaries to the Dark Continent. This was the project that had a new birth in the heart of Mills. In 1816 he persuaded the Presbyterian "Synod of New

York and New Jersey" to enter upon his plan for educating Christian men of color for the work of the gospel in their fatherland. That same year he sailed in company with the Rev. Ebenezer Burgess (afterwards pastor of the "exiled" church of Dedham) to explore the coast of Africa for the site for a colony. On the return voyage he died, and his body was committed to the sea. When his surviving colleague brought home the sorrowful news, good men made lamentation; and some remembered how he had said to one of his fellows, as the class was scattering at the end of its studies, "You and I, brother, are little men, but before we die, our influence must be felt on the other side of the world." Only five years of active service, but the young man's word had come true!

The crowning act of this decade of beneficent organization was the instituting of the American Home Missionary Society in 1826. It was well named "American," for the

only limitation on the largeness and freedom of its mission work was the geographical limitation implied in that title. It was intended to coordinate and economize the work of many societies, presbyteries and synods, under the "Plan of Union" which already for a quarter-century had been in operation, to the great aggrandizement and invigoration of the Presbyterian Church, and inevitably to the infusing into the articulate system of Presbyterianism something of the spirit that had been trained in the town-meetings and Congregational churches and the searching theological discussions of New England. By and by, when satisfaction in the growing numbers, wealth and influence of the Presbyterian Church shall come into collision, in some minds, with jealousy of the prevalence of this new spirit, consequences may ensue which could not be distinctly forecast in advance.

CHAPTER XVI

PUBLIC REFORMS

It took a wonderfully short time to recruit the Boston Orthodox Congregationalists to a much higher effective force than that of the entire body of the churches before the disruption. The work may be considered as mainly achieved, when, in 1826, that fiery spirit, Lyman Beecher, was persuaded, at the high noontide of his great powers, to leave his rural parish on the hills of Litchfield, Connecticut, to become pastor of the newly organized Hanover Street Church. Here the intense earnestness of his preaching, with its strong appeal to the reason as well as to the feelings, was attended with constant and great spiritual results. For the six years that he remained, he was as distinctly the most

conspicuous leader of the Evangelical churches as Dr. Channing of the Liberal churches. Two eminently good men more contrasted in every quality of intellect and temperament it is difficult to conceive of, than these two representative Congregationalists. It so happened that the time when they were serving so near each other, yet completely out of each other's sight and touch, was a time when the Congregational churches all with one accord, though in two divisions, were taking conspicuous part in some of those reformatory movements in which from the beginning they have had a noble record; it was also a time when the two parties, beside the conflict of each against the other, were grievously vexed each with sore controversy among its own members. How the Unitarian fellowship was distracted by the emerging of the Transcendentalists and the neology of Parker we have already briefly told. Hardly more time need we spend in narrating the small

contentions over questions of the metaphysics of theology which embroiled parties and schools among the Evangelicals. It is difficult at the present day to appreciate the eagerness with which the tenuous distinctions that divided Andover from New Haven, and afterwards East Windsor from both, were gravely debated among the abler men, and painfully pettifogged by the lesser. Doubtless these divisions of party and faction, acrimonious as they were, were in some measure mitigated by the common zeal of all for great human interests.

The interest of the Puritan churches of America in the conflict with drunkenness dates from their foundation. Among the earliest public ordinances of the legislatures were those for repressing the abuse of ardent spirits. The "Reforming Synod" put special emphasis on the importance of enforcing these laws. In fact the laws were of a most wise and salutary character, such as later devices have not much improved

upon. Under them the tippling-house, "saloon," or public barroom was illegal. The taverner's license empowered him to furnish to his lodgers their customary drinks; but not to allow drinking at the bar to his neighbors. President Dwight, in his "Travels," notes the contrast between the orderly New England tavern, under the restraint of this law, and the disorder visible at the taverns beyond the New York line, where the license was regarded as a means of raising revenue. Nevertheless towards the end of the eighteenth century, as a result of combined causes not difficult to trace, there had come a wide-spread and pitiable lapse into drunken habits. Simultaneously, in various parts of the American church, there was a sudden awakening to an evil and peril that had grown stealthily and unobserved. It is no extravagant boast to say that among the earliest and most efficient leaders of the new reformation were the foremost men of the Congregational

churches. Ebenezer Porter, Heman Humphrey, and the heroic layman, Jeremiah Evarts, were of the number. But the names of Lyman Beecher and William Ellery Channing are honorably preeminent in these early days. Suddenly confronted with the actual state of society by an incident in his pastoral work in Litchfield, Beecher burst forth with an eruption of volcanic eloquence in "Six Sermons on Intemperance" which were repeated in Boston and published in many editions. In impressive contrast with his impetuous neighbor, Channing, with calm intensity of speech, argued from his cherished tenet of the dignity of human nature, which he held with justifiable reaction from the extravagant statements of the traditionary theology, against the vice which debased one made "little lower than the angels" to the level of the lunatic or the idiot or the brute. And no doubt, this gentler voice could reach many a heart and conscience to which louder tones found no access.

The first national temperance society was organized in 1826. The best and most enduring work of the reformation was achieved within ten years from that date; and it was accomplished "without law, without any attempt at legislation, by the mere force of public opinion." It was the work of the Christian church, wherein if many daughters of Zion did virtuously, it would be willingly admitted that the Congregational clergy and churches, and those that had been colonized from them into the Presbyterian Church excelled them all.

Later, the work took on a more ascetic and censorious character. From the year 1840 it was assumed very much into the hands of professional "reformed drunkards" naturally inclined to extenuate their own faults by describing themselves as "victims" and putting the blame on "the traffic"; and into the hands of politicians who promised to secure the triumph of virtue by exterminating temptation. Even

through these devious courses it was sustained by a great following from the churches, but no longer with that unanimity to which was due its early success.

With reference to the subject of slavery, also, the record of the primeval Congregationalists was wholly noble. The unbroken succession of protests and deeds against slavery has often been recorded, from the acts of the Great and General Court of Massachusetts (which, be it remembered, was also a church court) through the utterances of John Eliot and Samuel Sewall and Cotton Mather, down to the days of the war of independence, when the voices of Samuel Hopkins and Ezra Stiles and Levi Hart and Aaron Cleveland, with many others, were lifted up in chorus in denunciation of the wrong. A little later (1791) the younger Jonathan Edwards preached before the Connecticut Abolition Society that sermon on "The Injustice and Impolicy of the Slave-trade" which was long cher-

ished and circulated as a classic of anti-slavery literature. It is not necessary to derogate from the high honor due to Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians and Quakers, in thus asserting the worthy position held by the Congregationalists in the conflict with slavery. The tug of war began with the successful aggression of slavery in extending its domain beyond the Mississippi in 1820. Four trumpet-toned articles by Jeremiah Evarts in *The Panoplist*, rallied the opposition from its momentary discouragement, to an immediate, general, sustained and systematic effort for the abolition of slavery. The response was prompt and general. Those parts of it which most concern this story are the crusade organized by the students of Andover for anti-slavery agitation by the press and by speakers detailed to the neighbor towns; the annual fourth-of-July anti-slavery mass meetings maintained by the united Congregational and Baptist churches at Park Street

Church, Boston; and the effort, originating at Andover, for the establishment of a college for the liberal education of young men of color—an effort that narrowly failed of success.

The Congregational churches had some advantages over others, with the drawbacks incidental to them, in their dealing with this question, destined to become so exciting and divisive. 1. They had only the scantiest affiliations at the South, which gave them the less power of influence over slaveholding communities, but released them from one temptation to make undue concessions to them. 2. Their State representative bodies, at this time, were exclusively clerical, and so exempt from the danger of being unduly swayed by politician members. 3. Their large charitable and religious operations were carried on, not by delegated bodies framed into the constitution of the churches, but by voluntary associations of individuals, undertaking

the duty of almoners in behalf of as many as might choose to trust them, and leaving the rest free to choose some other channel for their bounty. These were among the conditions that made it comparatively easy for the Congregationalists to pass through a most difficult crisis with conspicuous fidelity to truth and righteousness.

During this period of "storm and stress" the churches were exposed to a double danger. Either they might be tempted, by no ignoble considerations, to compromise the interests of justice and humanity for the sake of religious or national peace; or they might be incited to a polemic fury of denunciation, censoriousness and hatred. To hold the religious public, in its various organizations to the middle course of strict righteousness was no light task. Among those whose influence most availed to accomplish it, with Albert Barnes of the Presbyterians and Francis Wayland of the Baptists, like precedence will be generally

conceded to the names of Channing and Leonard Bacon, Congregational pastors.

Out of many incidents of that period of anti-slavery agitation of which the Missouri Compromise (1820) was the beginning, and the repeal of the Missouri Compromise by the Kansas-Nebraska Bill (1854) was the beginning of the end, four may be named as of leading importance—the founding of Oberlin College and Theological Seminary (1834–5); the slavery debate in the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (1845); the founding of *The Independent* (1848); and the Albany Convention (1852).

For those who know only the Oberlin of to-day, well endowed, abounding in numbers and resources, firmly intrenched in the confidence of the American church, and glorious with the prestige of great spiritual achievement, there is needed no small effort of the historic imagination to realize not only the feebleness and heroism of faith in

which it made its beginnings, but also the serious distrust with which it was regarded by wise and good men both at the West and at the East who were intent on the same objects by different methods. The founders of this great institution were of the number of the "young men who see visions." A young Presbyterian pastor at Elyria, Ohio, John J. Shipherd, and an ex-missionary to the Choctaw Indians, Philo P. Stewart, then living at Shipherd's house, concerted between them the plan of a college open alike to men and women, furnishing a liberal education at the lowest possible cost; about the college as a centre, they would plant a community of Christian people like-minded with themselves. With few inducements beside the sheer joy of self-sacrifice, they gathered a little company of New England Pioneers in Ohio. They secured the title to a township of wild land in the "Western Reserve," entered upon it, axe in hand, cleared land and built their cabins and

their first college building. Soon an incident occurred which gave an unexpected forward impulse to the undertaking. At Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati, where Lyman Beecher had come from Boston to be president, and Calvin E. Stowe was professor, discussion ran high among the students on the slavery question; which becoming known to the trustees, they, without consulting the faculty, undertook to suppress it by edict. The result was that four-fifths of the students agreed to go to Oberlin on condition that the evangelist, Charles G. Finney, should be secured as their instructor. The condition was fulfilled, and the seminary which the projectors of this pilgrim colony had longingly hoped for was born in a day. With small respect to the warnings of prudent men as to the force of public prejudice, the college was freely open not only to both sexes but to all races. Without compromise or apology, the institution

was committed to a bold and unpopular radicalism.

Mr. Finney himself was an impersonation of the characteristics of Oberlin. A man of absolute consecration, of ascetic self-denial, of tireless activity and endurance, he had ranged the country, east and west, on tours of revival preaching that had been attended by remarkable results, not only of momentary agitation (which was often great) but of the solid and lasting conversion, especially of men of intelligence and force, to lives of intense evangelic earnestness like his own. But his beneficent work was associated with "new measures" and new forms of doctrinal statement that excited serious misgiving or positive disapproval. His theology was in advance even of the Edwardean school, in its insistence on "ability as commensurate with obligation," and on a tenet of "Oberlin perfectionism" which led near the perilous verge, and in some cases beyond the verge, of antinomi-

anism. For many years an Oberlin graduate was liable to be looked on doubtfully by cautious men, until he had personally given proof of soundness of doctrine and sobriety of judgment. Under a more rigid polity, such deviations would have led (as in the Presbyterian Church they did lead) to denominational schism. In this case, they led to earnest and instructive discussion, to the slow modification of opinions and methods on both sides, and to the grateful recognition of Oberlin as a noble reinforcement in that service of Christ to which it had been consecrated by the prayers of its founders.

The debate and consequent action on the subject of slavery at the annual meeting of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, at Brooklyn, in 1845, were of critical importance. The question at issue was whether every holder of a slave ought by a fixed rule to be excommunicated, without regard to his conduct in that relation. The representatives of the

Anti-slavery Society, present in force, urged the affirmative. The question was debated with patience and thoroughness, and at the end a report was unanimously adopted reprobating in the strongest language the system of slavery, but refusing to sanction the rule condemning every slaveholder regardless of his conduct as such. The unanimity of this action was proof of that sober anti-slavery sentiment of the American church in its several sects which carried the country, at last, for freedom. Of course many were disappointed at the failure of extreme action, and the cry was raised that "the church was the bulwark of slavery." But it was a happy illustration of the flexibility with which the Congregational polity accommodates itself to new exigencies, that the dissatisfied party found their redress so ready to their hand. Not being content with the declared policy of its almoner, they were free to find another. Within a year the "American Missionary

Association" was organized on distinctly and aggressively anti-slavery principles, and offered its services as an agency for both home and foreign missions. There was nothing schismatic in this. The new society entered at once on a limited but useful work; and the effect of its bid for the confidence of the churches was wholly salutary. The history of this and some like incidents may well satisfy the student that the best security against abuses in large charitable operations lies in the ready facility with which one agency may be exchanged for another, on the slightest occasion. A more recent illustration of the same principle was presented on occasion of a serious dissatisfaction with the doings of the executive of the "American Board." The organization of a "Berkeley Temple Committee" promptly supplemented the defaults of the Board, and afforded that body a *locus penitentiæ* of which it was not unduly slow to avail itself.

Another incident of this period which requires little more than mention, but which is too important to the later history not to be mentioned, is the founding of *The Independent* newspaper in New York, in 1848, with Leonard Bacon, Joseph P. Thompson and Richard S. Storrs, Jr., as editors, Joshua Leavitt as office editor, and Henry Ward Beecher, then lately come from the West to be pastor of Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, as special contributor. The starting of this metropolitan enterprise was one indication out of many, of the disposition of the Congregationalists to escape from their provincial limitations and to take the continent for a field of work. Already they had showed a notable proclivity to religious journalism. Thomas Prince, Jr., in 1743-4, had published his weekly journal of revival news under the title of *The Christian History*. *The Boston Recorder* was instituted in the height of the Unitarian controversy with Sidney E. Morse, son of Jedediah,

as editor; and through sundry changes of title is continued to this day as *The Congregationalist. The Religious Intelligencer,* at New Haven, early in the century did important service in guiding the swelling current of anti-slavery discussion. In 1823 the brothers Morse founded, and for twenty-five years conducted, along cautiously conservative lines, *The New York Observer.* In 1831 *The New York Evangelist* was begun by Joshua Leavitt; one of its earliest successes was the publication of reports of Mr. Finney's sermons and lectures. In its later management, much of its editorial writing was done by Dr. Leonard Bacon and by his son George, pastor at Orange. The fact that so much of this important work of Congregationalists was done in no distinct connection with their denomination was highly characteristic. But the new journal was at the beginning an expounder and advocate of Congregationalism. It was an invaluable adjuvant in the new westward

movement of the New England polity. And in the thickening slavery debate it was a mighty defender of those sober and strongly defensible positions against slavery which came to be the positions of the loyal states and of the nation.

For more than two centuries, since the Cambridge Synod of 1846-8, there had been no attempt at a general meeting representing the Congregationalists of America, when a movement of the General Association of Michigan resulted in an invitation to every Congregational church in the United States to be represented by pastor and delegate at a convention at Albany, October 5, 1852. There was serious reason why the demand for such a convention should proceed from the West. The "Plan of Union" had been repudiated in no courteous fashion by the Old School majority in the Presbyterian General Assembly at the time of its high-handed act of excision by which that sect had been broken into two nearly equal parts.

The strong sympathy of the Congregational churches for the exscinded New School Church had made them reluctant to withdraw from that agreement, disadvantageous to themselves as it was known to be in its practical working. But it was now beginning to be apparent to both parties that the agreement could no longer be maintained. The eager competition of the Presbyterian agencies to secure a foothold in new settlements "in advance of all others," and the public disparagement of Congregationalism at the West as being something far less respectable than its New England original, called for an open demonstration of mutual fellowship between East and West, and some action on the "Plan" which had so manifestly outlived its usefulness. The convention was large and earnest. Four hundred and sixty-three pastors and delegates were present. Its most important action was, (1), by a unanimous vote to abandon the "Plan of Union"; (2), to reprobate

the insinuations and charges against Congregationalists at the West; (3), to deliver with emphasis the unvarying protest of these churches against the "stupendous wrong" of slavery; (4), to undertake the raising of a fund of $50,000 to aid in building churches at the West—a fund that was begun on the spot by the subscription of $10,000 from one of the delegates. The fund went on growing till it exceeded $60,000.

The Albany Convention cleared the way, as it had not been cleared before, for the free advance of Congregational principles and organizations at the West.

CHAPTER XVII

CONGREGATIONALISM NATIONAL

In the westward advance of Congregationalism, it is easy, looking backward, to recognize, what was not always obvious at the time, that there were two Congregationalisms moving forward together, sometimes closely intertwined. First there was the Congregationalism of the old New England pattern, in which the form of polity was cherished as the best means of bringing the Christian people of any community into common fellowship and organization. The principles of this Congregationalism implied the duty of individuals and parties in any community to accept loyally and fraternally the judgment of the whole, even when it contravened their own; and by relieving the local congregation of

any bondage of allegiance to a national sectarian propaganda, made it the easier for people of various persuasions and prejudices to come together. Secondly, there was the come-outerism commended by Dr. Emmons as a "Scriptural Platform of Ecclesiastical Government," the "scripture" of which was most distinctly written in the "*Contrat Social*" of Jean Jacques Rousseau. It involved an unlimited "right of secession," and the right of the seceders to organize on an exclusive basis, keeping out such of their fellow-Christians as were uncongenial to them. This was the ideal under which the seceding Orthodox churches of Eastern Massachusetts had been organized into a wonderfully effective and aggressive dissenting sect. From this influential centre it widely affected the Congregationalism of the whole country. Not only did the use of imposed and prescribed doctrinal tests (so abhorrent to the Fathers) come into general use; but the new churches

were distinctly labeled "Trinitarian" or "Calvinistic"; and it came to be considered quite laudable, by stipulations in the covenant, to erect churches on an anti-slavery, or a total-abstinence, or a prohibitionist basis. The former method gave rise to Congregational churches, sometimes not ostensibly bearing that denomination, and uniting in one fellowship such various elements as go to make up the Christian population of a new settlement. The latter constituted *churches of Congregationalists*, in which each member was presumed to prefer a certain polity and type of dogma and usage of worship. It is remarkable that notions so mutually contradictory could work so kindly in harness together in home mission work. It is needless to ask which of the two was the more effective force in proselyting and propagandism.

An interesting feature in the westward work of the Congregational churches has been the part taken in it by groups of col-

lege friends. In fact this is a frequently repeated feature of all church history. To name no others, there was the group of Ignatius Loyola and his friends at Paris; the "Holy Club" at Oxford in the days of the Wesleys; the Oriel College group later at the same university; and (not unworthy to be named with these eminent instances) "The Brethren" of Samuel J. Mills at Williamstown and Andover; and the "Illinois Band" organized at Yale Theological Seminary in 1827, the type of later brotherhoods devoted to like service, and of more recent fraternities for "college settlement" and for university missions in the ends of the earth.

If limits of space would permit, it would be a pleasure to transcribe so noble a roll of honor as the seven names of the Illinois Band. Eminent among them were Theron Baldwin, "Father of Western Colleges," and Julian M. Sturtevant, for fifty-six years in the service of Illinois College at Jackson-

ville. The method of the "Band" was followed by its successors. They seek the neediest or most hopeful field; they post themselves within supporting distance of each other; they establish churches and send for reinforcements; by combination they found a college. Western New York and Ohio had been occupied under the Plan of Union. Indiana had been occupied in force by the Methodist Church. Illinois was in need of laborers and they entered it with admirable zeal and success. The Iowa Band (Andover, 1843), and the Washington Band (Yale, 1890) have made a like record.

The outbreak of the Civil War found the Congregationalists in a favored position. They had no Southern allies to be conciliated by compromise or antagonized by hostilities. They were of one accord on the questions on which other denominations were divided and intensely agitated. Churches and colleges emptied their young men into the Northern army. The victorious end of

the war opened a great field of beneficent activity from which they had before been excluded by their known anti-slavery principles. It was fit that the denomination which from the beginning had been foremost both in missions and in education, should be among the first and most effective in the new work of evangelization at once by church, school and college. With admirable promptitude and energy, the American Missionary Association recognized its calling, and became the almoner, not of Congregationalists only, but of many others eager to help in the work. The record of the success of this great work at the South, afterwards expanding to include "the depressed races" generally, does not admit of being condensed into a tabular form; for it is in its nature diffusive. As it has not originated within sectarian limits, so its results are not confined by them. Any summary of its results must be taken with large allowance.

The new opportunities and responsibilities laid upon the Congregational churches by the changed conditions at the close of the war were widely felt to demand consideration in another National Council. It was thirteen years after the Albany Council of 1852, that the Boston Council of 1865 assembled, June 14th, in the venerable Old South Meeting-house. It enrolled five hundred and two members, ministers and delegates of the churches. No one felt that the council failed of a great and high success, notwithstanding that two of the chief points in its program were only approximately reached. Considering how many generations had passed since any authoritative declaration had been made of the common belief of the churches, and what considerable modifications had supervened upon the ancient "platforms" of polity, it was not unreasonable, in entering on widely expanded labors, to set forth distinct statements on both these points. It would have

been good for the churches represented to know their own mind clearly, and give clear and authorized assurances to the public whom they were offering to serve and to whom they appealed for cooperation. But after not a little debate, which left it uncertain whether the five hundred minds would agree in a common statement of belief, the council was fain to content itself with an improvised "Burial Hill Declaration" of adherence to the "faith and order held by our fathers" substantially as set forth two hundred years before. There is great virtue in that word "substantially." In like manner, a "platform" of church government, after the style of the Cambridge Platform, designed to represent existing usage, which had been prepared by two acknowledged authorities in church law, was laid aside in favor of a statement of principles in three brief paragraphs. Practically the most important work of the council was its appeal to the churches to raise $250,000 for im-

mediate service in the evangelization and education of the freedmen of the South.

At the close of the synod of 1637, held on occasion of the so-called Antinomian controversy, Governor Winthrop was so filled with delight at the spirit of wisdom and brotherly love that had prevailed, that (with a mind like that of Simon Peter in the holy mount) he proposed that there should be such a council every year. In like manner, the happy progress and outcome of the two National Councils at Albany and Boston led to the manifestation, not of a unanimous, but of a widely prevalent desire for a periodical national council. At various meetings held in the year 1870 for conference as to a celebration of the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrims, this desire had formal expression; and after due consultation and preparation, the first of a series of triennial National Councils was held at Oberlin, November 15, 1871, with an attendance of 276 repre-

sentatives of Congregational churches in twenty-five States and Territories. A Constitution was adopted, fixing a ratio of representation, recognizing the autonomy and independence of the churches, disavowing all pretensions to legislative or judicial functions, and repudiating any claim to be the only churches of Christ.

The National Council has thus far done little to justify the misgivings of those who doubted the wisdom of instituting it. One valuable service it has rendered with excellent tact and success. The declaration of the common belief of the churches by the vague announcement of a "substantial" agreement with ancient formulas had been quite satisfactory to very few, and highly unsatisfactory to many. The demand was presented to the National Council in 1880, for "a formula that shall not be mainly a reaffirmation of former confessions, but that shall state in precise terms in our living tongue the doctrines that we hold to-day."

The Council responded by appointing seven men who in turn should select a committee of twenty-five representing different regions and different tendencies, to draw up the desired statement. The sole instruction given by the Council to this committee of a committee, was this admirably judicious one—that they should report, not to the Council but directly to the churches and to the world, through the press. The "Confession of 1883," as their report is commonly called, bears no extrinsic sanction beyond the authority of the names subscribed to it; but as these include some of the ablest theologians and wisest men of their time, their work has met with general and solid approval. The document was signed by twenty-two out of the twenty-five names; and the entire freedom with which the three conscientiously withheld their signatures gave the more emphasis to the twenty-two names that were signed.

The value of a later change accomplished

by the moral influence of the National Council remains to be tested by time—perhaps a long time. At the Council of 1892, after a decade of controversy sometimes acrimonious concerning the conduct of the executive of the "American Board," a committee appointed three years before reported the existence of a wide-spread desire that the Societies which were the agents of the churches in the administration of their common charities, should become more directly representative of the churches in their constitution. It is a striking proof of the real pliability of a close corporation to public opinion expressed with emphasis, that with the least possible delay the "American Board" undertook to constitute a controlling part of its membership out of the nominees of the several State organizations representative of the churches. It had already been demonstrated how prompt and effective was the recourse of the churches in case of dissatisfaction with any of their almoners—

that it was simply to find or organize another to be employed instead. This course was taken in 1846, in the creation of the American Missionary Association, and again in 1888, in the activity of the Berkeley Temple Committee; in both cases with no harm done, and much incidental good. In this way no church had any difficulty in getting itself "represented" in the practical direction of the Societies. One hindrance was in the way of this recourse. The form of High-churchism by which Congregationalists are affected is that of investing their apparatus of benevolent societies with a solemn and sacrosanct dignity, as if to interfere with them or divide them were a schism or a sacrilege—a habit which has been characterized as "sacrificing to their net and burning incense to their drag." It is the prevalence of this feeling that makes the only need of constituting the societies by a series of primary and secondary elections like those that go

to the making up of a political convention.

It is conceivable that, in their present tendency towards solid organization on a continental scale as a sect in competition with other sects, Congregationalists may gain some of the advantages of confederation, while losing none of the distinguished advantages of the former independence; it is conceivable, but, judging from the past of church history, not probable. Looking far ahead, it is easy to foresee the emergence of questions upon credentials, or upon the "recognizing" of a theological seminary, that shall invest the National Council, in spite of itself, with judicial functions. In like manner the investing of State "Associations" with the right of nominating directors to national societies may, in easily imaginable contingencies, devolve upon the societies the arbitration of disputes, and draw them into controversies in comparison with which the stormiest experiences of the

past would seem like a calm. It is the loose texture of their organization which in the past has saved the Congregationalists, in every case but one, from any distinct and lasting schism. It is not possible to make the tissue more fibrous and hard, without making it more fissile.

The present tendency to federation is a clear triumph of the sectarian Congregationalism of Dr. Emmons and modern Boston, over that comprehensive Congregationalism of the New England Fathers, which was commended by Dr. Leonard Bacon and President Sturtevant. It remains to be seen whether the centripetal force will be happily balanced and corrected by the centrifugal.

CHAPTER XVIII

RECENT QUESTIONS

WHILE these events and movements, during the latter half of the nineteenth century, had been carrying the principles and institutions of Congregationalism to the ends of the continent and of the earth, a change of practical theology had been going forward "not with observation" which is hardly less than revolutionary. The change began with the publication by Horace Bushnell of Hartford, 1847, of a thin volume of "Views of Christian Nurture and of Subjects Adjacent thereto." The history of the book is interesting. Two discourses on this thesis, "That the Child is to grow up a Christian," had excited not a little interest in the circle of the author's ministerial neighbors. The publication of them was called for, and the

discourses were unanimously approved and accepted for publication by the Massachusetts Sabbath-School Society. Months passed, during which influences were busily set at work, ultimately with success, to induce the Committee of Publication to reverse its action. The manuscript being returned to its author, was published by him with an "Argument for the Discourses" and additional papers, on "The Spiritual Economy of Revivals of Religion"; "Growth, not Conquest, the True Method of Christian Progress"; "The Organic Unity of the Family"; "The Scene of the Pentecost, and a Christian Parish." It could have been no matter of regret to the author that the efforts for the suppression of his book should have resulted (as usual in such cases) in quickening public interest in it. It was gravely impugned for heresy; but the author was fortunate in having drawn this fire in advance; his "argument for the discourses" went to prove not only that the doctrine of

the discourses was the common orthodoxy of the church from the earliest ages, but that the revivalism against which it was aimed was itself a modern innovation, dating chiefly from the Great Awakening of a hundred years before.

The inevitable discussion that followed upon this challenge was attended with no immediate visible consequences of importance; but not often in the history of theological literature has any book been so distinctly proved to have "its seed in itself after its kind." The author's high faith and deep sincerity of conviction, his boldness of paradoxical statement, and the rare charm of his literary style, both in this and in his copious later works, captivated the attention of thoughtful readers throughout Christendom. He survived the often renewed scourge of tongues, to find himself in his lifetime, canonized in the affections of multitudes in every part of the church catholic as saint and doctor of the church.

Directly, and quite as much indirectly, the little volume on Christian Nurture, in its original form and in its later redactions, has had a profound effect, in every sect of the American church, in modifying the exaggerated revivalism which has been its distinguishing characteristic for a century and a half. An incidental result of the book is found in the world-wide institution of the Societies of Christian Endeavor, the founder of which, as pastor of a church in Portland, Maine, refers to this book as the germ of his enormously productive labors for the young.

The bearing of this doctrine of Christian Nurture on the essence of the Congregational polity belongs partly to prophecy as well as to history. The story of the Congregational churches has been told inadequately indeed, if it has not disclosed the recurring embarrassments in which they have been involved, from the very beginning, by their demand, as a condition of full communion, for the

evidence of a conscious experience of conversion. It is wonderful what progress has been made, in fifty years, in the reconsideration of a principle once deemed axiomatic. The reconsideration cannot proceed further without being attended by reconstruction fitting to new conditions. An illustration added to many heretofore adduced, of the non-persistence of schisms among Congregationalists is found in the fact that the Seminary which was Dr. Bushnell's most acrimonious antagonist in this and later controversies, being now transplanted to Hartford, the scene of his illustrious labors, is distinguished among others by its reverence for his memory.

Of the difficulties encountered by Congregationalists in making the theological change of base necessitated by advances in Biblical study, there is the less occasion to speak, as these difficulties are common to all sects and all theologies. Yet it is well to record that theirs was the leadership into

these difficulties, through the pioneer work of Moses Stuart and Edward Robinson, and later of George R. Noyes, Andrews Norton and Theodore Parker; and they have paid their full quota of contributions to the relieving of the same difficulties.

More special to Congregationalism are certain questions just now emerging which concern the application of that polity to church work in great cities. One of them is this: whether, in meeting the exigencies of this work, the several congregations of the city may not so combine as to act, in some respects, as one church. History is not without some hints bearing on this question. It leads back the mind to that very early date (1650) when, the church in Boston having overflowed the capacity of its meeting-house, provision had to be made for the growing population. This was really a crisis in the development of the New England church polity. Should an additional meeting-house be built for the

church of Boston, now grown too large ordinarily to meet in a single building; or should there be two churches, a First and a Second? On this point the intimations of Scripture seem sufficiently clear; the students of the New Testament who had seen so clearly and insisted so sturdily that the Scriptures recognize no such thing as *the church* of a province, were certainly not incapable of perceiving the exactly parallel fact that the Scriptures are equally ignorant of *the churches* of a town; that "the church of Achaia" or "the church of Galatia" is not more foreign to apostolic usage than the First Church and Second Church in Ephesus, or the North Church and the South Church in Rome, or St. Cephas' Church and St. Apollos' Church and Christ Church in Corinth. Apparently, however, the arbitrary dogma that a church "ought not to be of greater number than may ordinarily meet together conveniently in one place" was already a veil upon their hearts. The an-

swer to pending questions about church work in cities must be sought by going back of the Cambridge Platform; and, in modern America, rather in the direction of church federation, than in the direction of sectarian combination.

Another question which sometimes arises touching the conduct of great city churches, involving the doubt whether the Congregational polity is applicable to that function, is answered by history with great distinctness. By painfully practical demonstration it has sometimes been made to appear as if the constitution that works admirably in a church of a hundred members was impracticable in a church of ten or fifteen times as many. The difficulty is identical with that which is encountered in the administration of the town-meeting government when the few hundred voters of the town have been multiplied to the many thousand voters of a city. The direct democracy of the town-meeting has to be

superseded, in that case, by the representative democracy of city government. The conduct of a multitudinous city church requires a like modification; otherwise it settles, in peaceful times, into an oligarchy; in times of excitement and irritation, it is in danger of becoming a mob. At all times, such a body is absurdly unqualified for the judicial duties which are among the most serious duties which devolve upon a church. A glance into the past, even the recent past, discloses an important relief for this difficulty; for it is within the memory of living men that New England churches have begun to be governed by universal suffrage. By approved usage the government of the church was in the hands of the men of full age. Looking still further back, we find the government of the church vested in a representative body of three or more elders, with a reference, on capital questions, to the vote of the brotherhood. It admits of doubt whether the original church of Boston, or

Salem, or Hartford, with its restricted suffrage, its government by a board of elders, and its lack of a prescribed code of dogma as a bar to membership, would be recognized to-day as a Congregational church. Future experience may show whether or not our modern Congregationalism is too rigidly hardened into its recent sectarian mould to admit henceforth of that elastic adaptation to changing needs by which it has formerly been distinguished.

CHAPTER XIX

THE UNITARIANS

THE story of that wide-spread alliance of churches which likes to claim for its exclusive use the title of *The* Congregationalists has been told at such length as to leave no adequate space for other histories that are entitled to be included under the same denomination.

The story of the Unitarian churches, from the beginning, is included in the general history of the churches of New England. The story of the disruption by which, early in the nineteenth century, the Congregational churches "became two bands," has been briefly told, with some incidents of later history. (See pp. 155–184.) But in general the Unitarian wing of the Congregational churches of America is entitled

to the beatitude pronounced on the land whose annals are brief. Its history is adorned with some of the noblest names in American literature, theology, patriotism and beneficence. Its influence on the mind of America and of the world has been quite out of proportion to its numbers; but then, on the other hand, its numbers and visible, corporate achievements are equally disproportioned to the magnificent equipment of men and material resources with which its career began. It began (taking 1820 as the date of the completed disruption) with more than one hundred churches, including some of the strongest and most historically venerable in America, and with a clergy such as (for its numbers) all Christendom beside could hardly show. At the end of forty years of immense expansion of the country, the number of churches had not been doubled; and the denomination had grown relatively weaker in its own metropolitan centre, Boston,

while its outposts were far from vigorous. It had no foreign missions; and had taken an inappreciably small part in the distinctive work of the Congregationalists—that of supplying the country with institutions of the higher learning. This statement makes no account of the beneficences of individuals; but making the largest allowance on this score, the comparative sterility of Unitarianism as a sect is a fact that needs explaining.

Some of the reasons for it are altogether honorable. From the outset, the Unitarian churches had been most unwilling to be a sect; and became such, not by their seceding from others, but because the others insisted on seceding from them. They were reluctant and slow in putting themselves in battle array for aggressive action. Appeals to sectarian pride and aggrandizement tended rather to repel than to attract; and rather than let anything be done through strife or vainglory, they some-

times preferred not to let anything be done at all. But after all it is not easy to acquit them of the charge of letting their liberalism lapse into indifferentism. There was truth as well as salutary pungency in the complaint of James Freeman Clarke: "The Unitarian churches of Boston see no reason for diffusing their faith. They treat it as a luxury to be kept for themselves. . . . I have heard it said that they do not wish to make Unitarianism too common."

After the close of the civil war, in which individual representatives of both clergy and churches had done splendidly distinguished service, in the field and in the hospital and preeminently in the Sanitary Commission, the impulse to undertake some important work for the reconstructed country which was felt by every religious organization, did not fail to excite to good works the Unitarian body. The American Unitarian Association, which since its beginning in 1825 had languished on a starv-

ing income, took a vigorous start forward. Its income rose at a bound from $8,000 to $100,000. Among the first-fruits of this new enterprise was the extremely effective measure of establishing stations at important university towns, beginning with Ann Arbor, Michigan. But the considerable accretions to Unitarianism as a denomination, particularly at the West, which ensued upon this aggressive policy were attended with serious inconveniences. Among the new adherents were some who in the violence of their reaction from more rigorous forms of Christianity were openly reacting from Christianity itself. The system of Unitarianism as a school of Christian teaching was thus brought under a wider and more serious reprobation, which the sincere faith and wholesome instruction and saintly lives of its great theologians and philanthropists have availed little to avert.

That the mission work of the Unitarians

should have a more distinctly sectarian character than that of other Christian bodies is a paradoxical fact which is explained by the necessity of the case. It is the attitude of their fellow-Christians towards them that forces them, in turn, into an attitude most uncongenial to their antecedents and habits. The ill-effects to both parties of the complete sundering of fellowship between the two parties of Congregationalists, finds new illustration in a divergence now in progress. A tendency zealously favored among the Orthodox is to abolish the parish or "ecclesiastical society" which has been ordinarily the holder of the temporalities of the church, and to have the church itself made a legal corporation for the holding of its property, real and personal. The Unitarians, moving in the other direction, tend to the abolishing of the church as a distinct spiritual covenanted body, leaving nothing but a society behind.

The history of this last hundred years has

dwelt on divergences more and more distinctly emphasized between these parties. There are also converging lines, growing more and more distinct with the lapse of recent years. It may be that a new chapter is about to be added to the history.

CHAPTER XX

A WIDER REVIEW

We have now traced, in our rapid narrative, the growth on American soil of a system of church polity which has profoundly influenced the course of church history and even of political history in the western hemisphere. Many factors have entered into the result. There was the providential opportunity afforded to the Founders of freely building, not on other men's foundations. There was sincere and diligent study of the Scriptures in search of a divinely approved polity. There was reaction from abuses that had been observed and painfully experienced in the old country. There was pressure of new exigencies in the new country. Incidentally there was the influence, never a controlling one, of

many past years of Separatist theorizing and experimentation, of which the fairest and sweetest fruit was the feeble church and colony of Plymouth.

This polity native to the soil took vigorous and enduring root, while all the colonial church establishments beside, Catholic, Anglican, Quaker, and Reformed, died or languished. Early in the nineteenth century, the course of the history of the Congregational churches of America became divided into two streams of very unequal volume—a division which has persisted to the present day.

Of the several church-fellowships distinctively Congregational in organization but not in the same line of historical connection with the primeval churches, one is so preeminent in numbers and honorably distinguished in its long history as to have demanded a separate volume on "The Baptists" in the series of "The Story of the Churches."

Among the rest, one of the most interesting is that which entitles itself "The Christian Connection." It was a growth of the great revival at the beginning of the nineteenth century, at which time a serious protest against the insistent dogmatism of many Congregational and Presbyterian churches, setting up codes of doctrine as a bar to membership, alienated some earnest people who, finding themselves thus excluded from the communion which they would have sought, entered into fellowship with each other on the basis of a common allegiance to Christ, and a common subjection to the will of God as set forth in the Scriptures. By a notable coincidence this process was going on simultaneously at three remotely distant centres of revival, in Virginia, in Vermont, and in Kentucky and Ohio. The multiplying and increasing congregations were not long in finding each other out, even over such vast intervening distances, and in entering into relations of

correspondence. Agreeing in a common faith and a common order, they are still more emphatically at one in their repudiation of imposed creeds as barriers to fellowship among Christian disciples, and their protest against sectarian names and divisions. We have already seen how, about this same time, there arose, especially in Eastern Massachusetts, an inordinate zeal for imposing dogmatic tests, and for propagating select sectarian churches according to the pattern designed in the "Scriptural Platform" of Dr. Emmons. This tendency among the Congregationalists of that period did much to justify and even necessitate the separate organization of "The Christian Connection." By a process not without precedent in church history, the protest against sectarianism became itself the basis of a sectarian organization; and the honorable aversion to bear any divisive name has inevitably resulted in the perversion of the name of Christ (as at Corinth in the

apostolic age) into a sectarian appellation.

The churches of "The Christian Connection," nearly fifteen hundred in number, comprising upwards of one hundred thousand communicants, are simply Congregational churches. There was once a reason for their separate organization. At the present day, no such reason (aside from the fact that the organization already exists) could be alleged which would not be equally a reason why the communion of the Congregational churches should be itself divided by the withdrawal or exclusion of some of its worthiest churches. The continuance of the divided organization after the reasons for it have ceased is one illustration out of many of how much easier it is to create a division than to heal it.

The Universalist denomination, which, through changes of sentiment on both sides of the dividing line of controversy, is in less sharp antagonism than formerly with the

"orthodox" sects, is nevertheless removed from the category of strictly Congregational churches by some features of organization which affiliate it rather to the family of the classical or synodical churches. A like observation would apply to some of the organizations of the vastly expanding and increasing body of the Lutheran churches, among which the tendency towards the autonomy of the local congregation is clearly noticeable.

In fact the prevailing power of the Congregational principle, in America, is nowhere more impressively manifested than in its practical dominance in those orders of the American church in which theoretically it is least recognized. No American sect has been organized with a loftier contempt of Congregational principles than the Methodist Episcopal Church as it took form under the controlling influence of John Wesley. "We are not republicans, and do not intend to be," was his characteristic dictum. But

in spite of his intentions, that is the direction in which his great institute is tending. Even the *form* of the original oligarchy has been modified by our climatic conditions; and where the form remains, it is well understood, both within and without, that the absolute authority over the individual congregation is to be exercised with scrupulous regard to the previously ascertained wishes of the congregation.

It would naturally be expected that the last of the hierarchical church-governments to yield to the Congregational principle of local home rule should be the episcopacy of the Roman Church. And indeed through many trying and critical years the conflict between hierarchical authority, and congregational rights under the name of "trusteeism," was fought out, and carried in favor of the hierarchy at last, only under pressure of the extreme sanctions of spiritual power. The result of the conflict was nominally a complete victory of the episco-

pate over the congregations; but virtually it left the two parties in such a mood of respect for each other's powers as to result in a tacit understanding that the absolute power of the clergy is to be exercised, except in extreme cases, according to the ascertained wishes of the congregation. It would be too much to say that the polity of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States is Congregational; it is not too much to say that the administration of it has been profoundly affected by the spirit of those conceptions of church order which are the native growth of our soil. Nowhere is this influence more justly appreciated than in those conservative circles of Old World Catholicism in which the words "*l'américanisme*," "*der Amerikanismus*," are whispered as words of serious portent.

The Story of the Congregationalists as here told has been narrowly limited to the genesis, growth and expansion of it in America. In England, the practical institu-

tion of Congregational churches had to wait for a half century from the American beginnings. Under the Commonwealth, the problem of the reconstruction of the ecclesiastical institutions of the nation was resolved in the Westminster Assembly in a Presbyterian sense. In that historic council the principles that had been wrought out into practice in New England were represented by a minority inconsiderable in number, but in every other measurement worthy of all consideration. What might have been the result if the great leaders of the New England churches had not declined the urgent invitation to return and take part in the deliberations, is an interesting but not a practical question. The many New Englanders who did return and rose to high places under Parliament and Protector must doubtless, by their testimony, have made a deep impression on public opinion. But those uncertain and stormy days were not favorable to church-building, and whatever begin-

nings were made were soon swept away by the fetid reflux of the Restoration.

The history of the English Congregationalists from the Act of Toleration in 1689 is not less noble than that which we have recounted in America. It is the story of patient endurance for conscience' sake under long persistent public odium and insult; of honorable achievement in education and learning and high public service, in spite of the protracted exclusion from the universities; and of self-denying mission work at home and in the ends of the earth, such as might well put to shame the Establishment with its immense resources, and provoke it, at last, to a worthy emulation.

The task imposed upon the Congregationalists of England was a far different one from that which had burdened their brethren in the American wilderness sixty and seventy years before, and in some respects a more painful one. The duty was not laid upon them to organize a system of

churches and parishes for a growing State; but only, in that evil and adulterous generation, to make such protest for righteousness and for liberty and purity in worship and discipline as their scanty numbers and poor resources would permit. There was no necessity for maintaining among their scattered congregations such mutual correspondence as was required among the parish churches of New England. Consequently it became characteristic of them to insist with emphasis upon the independence of the churches, and to look with distrust upon even the most guarded alliance of churches for common ends. Not until 1833 was a common organization effected, in "The Congregational Union of England and Wales." Of late the tendency has been strong in the direction of closer organization, being promoted by frequent correspondence with the American churches, and still more by a growing sense of the common interests and duties of the free churches of the

United Kingdom, in all their different orders. The wide and powerful expansion of Congregational institutions throughout the British Islands and the British Empire is a fit subject for a volume, but must here be passed with a mere mention. Like brevity must needs be observed in referring to the spontaneous tendency towards Congregational polity which is observable in recent movements for "reformation without tarrying" that have been begun in state-church countries, whether Catholic or Protestant, as Italy, France, Switzerland, Germany, and the Scandinavian countries.

The crowning glory of the Story of the Congregationalists is the record of what they have done, not for the upbuilding of themselves into a strong and numerous sect, but, in honorable disregard of such ambition, for the glory of God in the service of his creatures. None can deny them this honor, that their charity has been of that sort which "seeketh not its own." Taking

the lead in the organization of large charities, they have been controlled, in this work, by a veritable passion for fellowship with all Christians, insomuch that a large part of their greatest work stands without credit to themselves and even accredited to others. In "the Leavening of the Nation" (to borrow the apt title of Dr. Clark's interesting history), their work extends far beyond the nearly six thousand churches that are affiliated with each other under the sectarian title. Few clergy-lists of American denominations fail to show in places of highest usefulness the names of those trained in this discipline. It implies no disparagement to the good work of other orders of churches, to say (what none will deny) that the Congregationalists have been preeminently leaders in the higher education. Their monumental work is seen, not only in the chain of institutions stretching across the continent bearing the sectarian name, but beginning with Harvard and Yale and

Princeton and Schenectady and the Western Reserve, it includes with these many others into which the life and strength of their sons has passed, but which they did not care to limit by affixing their own name, and which they were even content to see taken under the exclusive direction of others.

From their first germinant growth in the soil of New England, the Congregational churches have been consecrated by a special divine unction to the work of missions. From John Eliot to David Brainerd, and from Brainerd to Mills and his fellows beside the Williamstown haystack, and from their day to this present, the bright succession has never been interrupted. But as in other enterprises, so in this, they have not been careful to brand their work with their own trade-mark. By preference it has been from of old their choice that the fruits of their successful service should be indistinguishably mingled with those of their fel-

low-Christians; and when, in process of time, they have been found laboring in detachment from the rest of "the sacramental host," it has been not because they have withdrawn from others, but because others have withdrawn from them. They may well afford this noble carelessness; for their record is on high, and even here on the blurred pages of our earthly history, it is no doubtful record. The rich and perennial fruits of labors that have been wrought on all the continents and islands under the direction of the London Missionary Society, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the American Home Missionary Society, and the American Missionary Association are abundant and fragrant in every corner of the garden of the Lord. And their seed is in themselves after their kind.

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