

CONGREGATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

*By*

CHARLES SUMNER NASH



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Congregational  
administration







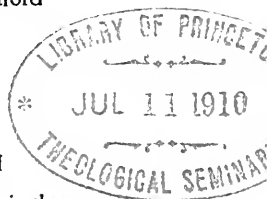


# CONGREGATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

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The Carew Lectures before the Hartford  
Theological Seminary  
1908-1909

BY CHARLES SUMNER NASH

Professor of Homiletics and Pastoral Theology in the  
Pacific Theological Seminary



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## PREFACE

The following lectures, published substantially as they were delivered, attempt to state sympathetically and constructively the principles of the Congregational polity with reference to present phases and problems. Attention is not turned upon the past. The Scriptural deduction of our principles and the story of our historic development have been given repeatedly. These lectures, while consistent with the past, desire to serve immediate conditions and emergencies in our church life. We are in no little confusion, such as always attends progress. There are earnest inquiries and disagreements among us respecting methods of procedure. Reorganizations in the interest of closer ranks and united action are proceeding in many parts of the land, and as well in oversea Congregationalism. We are feeling our way toward the better thing. That there is a better thing and that we can and must achieve it large numbers of us are convinced. The Congregational churches in large majority seem intent upon becoming the Congregational Church.

Our problem is that of an efficient democracy, how to organize an effective union without overriding or fettering personal and local liberty; or, in the words of Mr. John Fiske, "the task of combining indestructible union of the whole with indestructible life in the parts."<sup>1</sup> It is, moreover,

<sup>1</sup> *Beginnings of New England*, p. 48.

how to do this in our Congregational way, how to make our own peculiar contribution to modern development in both Church and State. With local independence we are perfectly familiar; of union of the whole we are still not a little ignorant and afraid. Upon that union, however, in some wise form, we are resolved, answering the charge of inefficiency and defeat, and responding to the call of modern organized life to unflagging zeal and grander enterprise. The mission of Congregationalism — whether in other hands or ours — to human progress is still great and long. The service of our own body of churches is believed to be far from complete. Our augmented resources, personal and material, have overtaxed the old methods of service, and are waiting half inactive to be marshaled afresh. The new ways, so far from being less than denominational, are taking interdenominational, national and international proportions. Many-voiced and sharp is the challenge to enlarged administration for mightier movements afield.

CHARLES SUMNER NASH.

Berkeley, California, August 1, 1909.

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TO MY WIFE



LECTURE I  
ESSENTIAL CONGREGATIONALISM





# CONGREGATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

## I

### ESSENTIAL CONGREGATIONALISM

THE Congregational polity ranks with the Presbyterian, the Episcopalian and the Papal polities as one of the historic forms of church organization. It is found in principle and illustration in the New Testament. Framed and developed in the last three hundred years, it has already made great history. Brought to these shores by the Pilgrims, it gave creative spirit and form to this nation; a form remaining essentially unaltered, a spirit unsubdued by corruption.

From early years this polity has been carried beyond the circle of churches which originated it. Since Roger Williams the **Other Congregational** Congregational Baptists have **Denominations** become a multitude. Using essentially this order there are also Unitarians, Disciples, Christians, Plymouth Brethren and others, until the Congregational polity now covers more than forty per cent. of the American Protestant churches. The several regiments show minor differences; the main principles everywhere distinguish the polity. Doubtless we Congregationalists have special proprietary rights therein. We should show best its characteristic spirit. Dr. Williston Walker has well said, "The body known as the

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Congregational churches has a distinct unity and history. It represents something more than a form of church government. . . . 'The Congregational churches constitute a distinct religious whole — as marked in its characteristics as any religious denomination in America.'<sup>1</sup> Yet we cannot, nor would we, hinder others from developing the polity into efficiency superior to our own. And we must be quick to learn from any competent instructors.

These lectures will discuss the Congregational polity with reference to our own body. They **The Congregational Polity To-Day** will not return to the field of New Testament study. From that source have been drawn often enough the form and warrant of our order. Nor shall we tarry in our three centuries of Congregational history. Glorious indeed it is, and worthy of all attention and labor. But these lectures are engaged upon the present day with a forward look. The taking of such modern limits should require no justification. Mr. Heermance is right, in his book on "Democracy in the Church," the most significant recent presentation of our polity, when he says, "The Christian Church must be free at any period to adapt the fundamental principles which it derives from Christ to the exigencies of its life. . . . We shall insist in the name of the churches on absolute freedom to apply fundamental principles directly to present

<sup>1</sup> Congregationalists, pp. 427, 428.

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conditions, whatever may have been the usage of the fathers.”<sup>1</sup>

There is abundant reason for attention to the present with reference to the future. The “Christian World” of London compared unfavorably our International Congregational Council in Edinburgh with the Pan-Anglican Congress held about the same time in London. It criticized the Edinburgh program as engaged too little with the present and future, adding, “Far too much time is taken up with inquiries into the title deeds of Congregationalism and what Congregationalism has done in the past. The burning questions are: What is Congregationalism doing to-day, and, What is it going to do in the future?” If that were the only voice of the kind, it might be ignored. But the same cry comes up from all quarters of the Congregational world. There is much inquiry, much suggestion, much perplexity, much strong purpose. The National Council in its Cleveland meeting made a list of recommendations to the churches which have engaged earnest attention throughout the land. Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, South Dakota, Washington, Northern and Southern California and other states have taken action in line therewith. The New England Congress is well forward in the advance. The South has joined the march.

<sup>1</sup> Democracy in the Church, pp. 2, 3.

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The Pacific Coast has attained an active self-consciousness. The present is a most promising hour by reason of our general concern and endeavor.

There is also much to make the present hour one of unusual opportunity for our polity in general, for any body of churches organized under it, and in particular for ourselves. We properly rejoice in our simplicity and adaptability, our breadth of sympathy, our freedom of thought, creed, speech and action. These qualities supply individual strength, but sometimes at a cost of corporate weakness. They have won many to our ranks, but have likewise spoiled us of multitudes who have easily slipped away into other connections. These qualities are now at a premium in our modern life. The new day has come forward to meet our fitness.

Furthermore, our polity furnishes one of the greatest principles for social and ecclesiastical organization, viz., personal and local autonomy, freedom and self-direction for the individual and the local group. This must be one of the corner-stones of the ultimate polity, as of perfected human life in all departments. It is interesting to observe how the other great polities have developed modernly in this direction of freedom. Under the Presbyterian order both Presbyterian and Methodist churches have secured an unprecedented measure of self-control. The Methodist bishop

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is a superintendent of work, not a lord of life, while the presiding elder has just been given the more suitable title of district superintendent. The Episcopalian churches are supervised without coercion, and enjoy much latitude of thought and creed as well as much free variety in active service. And even Rome has upon her hands some hardly manageable affairs, such as the French government, the Modernist movement, the American nation. This mere mention must suffice for the fact that the more highly organized polities have been tending our way in this central matter of human liberty. We who were free-born can watch with equanimity their purchases of freedom.

Important for us are also current developments toward direct democracy beyond the domain of religion. The new state of Okla- **Direct Democracy**  
homa has adopted a most demo- **in the State**  
cratic constitution. In Oregon great issues have been passed upon at the polls in state election, and the choice of United States Senator determined by popular vote. Direct primaries have come or are at hand in most states. New York's experience in the late campaign was characterized as the awakening of a great state. In that campaign the appeal all over the land was more than ever to the thinking man, presenting solid materials for reflection and decision. In politics, industry, education, and indeed in all social departments, the same movement toward enlightened

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participation is pronounced. In so far as this is the day of resurgent democracy, when the people reassert ultimate authority to delegate power and to withdraw it, when they insist upon returning to direct initiative in many things large and small, the churches that are constituted upon these very principles of individual intelligence, popular initiative and inalienable authority must realize a fresh opportunity.

Along with this movement back toward direct democracy has gone another tendency, viz., to-  
**Organized** ward stronger union. It is perhaps  
**Democracy** truer to say that the democratic movement has gone beyond individualism and direct democracy, and is driving hard into organized democracy. And by as much as our modern day has achieved stronger combination and more united action than ever before, our free churches must learn the ways of organized democracy. This is no time for the free-churchman to swing off alone and strike for Christ and humanity when and where he pleases. In state, in labor, in religion, we have reached glorious manhood and splendid group consciousness; so far we have restored the conditions and personal power of the New England town meeting or the New Testament churches; but we have also learned to marshal these "bayonets that think" into regiments and brigades and national armies and even international armaments. The men are free, the groups

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are independent in their local life, but they form of their own will a closer and mightier force than was ever driven together and wielded by coercive authority. It is this last step into administrative union that we Congregationalists need to take. We have the elements and resources in ample measure — strong personality, churches, associations, councils, conferences, national societies, educational institutions, National Council — all these afire with high spirit and possessing a constituency which holds great material resources. Wherever our machinery is not at any moment productive, it can readily be made so. The equipment is magnificent. It only needs to be set together into an effective array, wherein the total power can be driven upon one inclusive purpose. The future belongs, not to unordered individualism, not to authoritative compulsion, but to the voluntary administrative union of self-realized manhood, every man a king.

The administrative question of every hour for any polity, whether in Church or in State, and for any organized body under any polity, is the question of *efficiency and results*. We must answer for deeds. The Church is means, not end. We must ever ask, How may we do our full part in the world's work? This is the inquiry of these lectures. The question whether we Congregationalists are doing our full part is not up; we lament that we are not, and the lamentation is no less than national. The

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question is, How to do our part? Says one writer, "It is only by covering the meanness of our performances with the magnificence of our principles that we can hide from ourselves the extraordinary inefficiency of our present methods, judged as a method of conserving, continuing and extending the life of Christian communities."<sup>1</sup> Difference of opinion must be admitted upon what constitutes our Congregational part, how great it is, what results to aim at and count satisfactory. But most of us are not content to be a loose aggregation of churches, pleased to exemplify individualism, to diffuse an atmosphere of freedom, to show the organized modern world how little can now be done separately or how much can still be done separately, and to enjoy a quiet brotherhood of spiritual communion. We believe in more definite duty, more concrete and ponderable results. We hear the cry of souls lost through the interstices of unorganized search. We confess the obligation of united labor. We know that six thousand churches properly arrayed are able to produce enormous results, and we know that our six thousand churches are far short of that great measure. In that faith and these confessions is reason enough for our restlessness and discontent, our words of mutual reassurance, our splendid hope and courage, and our unflagging industry.

Efficiency, then, is the duty of the hour. But

<sup>1</sup> Macfadyen, *Constructive Congregational Ideals*, p. 47.



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efficiency has a fuller meaning in this social age. We cannot remain content to go on turning our church wheels, putting out individual spiritual product in moderate measure. The vast, tangled social problems have challenged us. Opportunity in these and inspiration for them must be given to men on a commensurate scale. Churches that are not living a national life cannot be fountains of national inspiration. Churches that are not feeling the pulse-beat of a close-knit body stretching far through the straining social fabric cannot speak to men's hearts with impulses that carry out into the heat and burden of the day.

The problem of efficiency is to be solved through adaptation. This principle may be denied a place in a *jure divino* system like that of Rome, but in democratic life it plays a constant and leading part. All our American churches claim to recognize and use it, none more properly than ourselves. The swift currents of modern advance cannot be shut out of the Church. It is the same men working in the Church who work in education and politics and business. They know that the forces of persuasion, construction and achievement are the same throughout. They are watching the shifting scenes of human action, the birth of new desires, the altered preferences, the sweep of new knowledge, the demand of new faith. Efficiency, for service and returns, is all for which they care. Without pain, with only a financial shrug, they

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throw out upon the scrap-heap machinery that scarcely shows wear, but has ceased to meet the more exacting requirement. In affairs ecclesiastical and spiritual these men are equally ready to discard old for new machinery, and hardly keep patient with men too attached to wheels and cogs and bands — or the absence of these — to discover that life's calendar has swept beyond them.

The Church is under fire for its tardiness in adaptation. Parts of its apparatus and methods **Tardy** are charged with being at least obsoles- **Adaptation** cent; it is obvious that the product is meager and old-fashioned. And yet we love them so, and cannot give them up, these true and tried servants of ours — not living men, but mere ways and means of doing things. Says a recent writer on our polity, "There is no limit to the power of adaptation which our system possesses. We are not faithful to our ideal, if we do not avail ourselves of it. . . . So far as methods are concerned, the Church has power to put on institutions when it wants them, and to put them off when it is done with them."<sup>1</sup> These words are a shout of administrative liberty, such as many a Congregationalist needs to hear. How often we act, and how many of us always act, as if we could not put off institutions and methods when we are done with them, and therefore dare

<sup>1</sup> Macfadyen, *Constructive Congregational Ideals*, pp. 116, 119.

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not put them on when we want them. Could we once get our seven hundred thousand American Congregationalists to rejoice unanimously in this power to assume and discard, the work of reorganization would go gloriously on. It is Professor Ladd of New Haven who wrote in his volume<sup>1</sup> that we Congregationalists ought to be willing to change as current conditions may demand, and must expect the alteration of all save our fundamental principles.

If, willing to adapt our polity to modern life, we ask what is required of us, the answer is already on many lips. The phrase, "some form of connectionalism," has lately become current among us, — **An Adequate Administrative System** — notorious, some stalwart independents might say. I like a phrase which I noted in Mr. Heermance's book, "An adequate administrative system." We need, for adaptation to the hour, an adequate administrative system. This we certainly lack at present. We have parts of such a system, working admirably in localities and departments. It will, for instance, be difficult to increase the enterprise, economy and productivity of the American Board, as indeed of not a few other Congregational agencies. But these parts have not been built together into a system. When we call for an adequate system, we mean equal to duty and its tasks. We have already noted how these have grown. They cannot be kept divided

<sup>1</sup>The Principles of Church Polity, p. 62.

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and subdivided into unrelated parts. We are oppressed with the separate administration of our national societies, whose work is organically one. Our place among the American Churches has become far less creditable than formerly. We have not retained the leadership which created this nation. And when this is said, it is not that petty thing, denominational rivalry, that is in mind, but duty to God and service to the abysmal needs of men. We are not so useful comparatively in the day's work as we used to be; our polity sometimes seems less so than other polities; and it is being employed to greater effect in other than Congregational hands. Others are showing us how much more a body of churches can do than we are doing. We appear to lack practical wisdom in administrative methods. This charge is brought against us from without and within, and judgment must be confessed when the case is stated in such comparative terms. In such terms, I say, for the case must be carefully put in order to be true. I cannot see that we Congregationalists have declined in either amount or quality of service. I believe our moral and spiritual living as a whole to be higher than ever, less morbid, more wholesome and out-of-doors, more winsome and productive. Our ministry never was so well equipped, devoted and faithful. Our methods never showed so much of wise adaptation and enterprise. Our resources are more generously expended than

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ever. But the comparison with the past has less of rebuke and impulse than some other comparisons. Measured by the immense strides of modern life, the bewildering growth of resources, the astounding disclosures of human need, the extent of new opportunity, the clearer vision of Christ our King, the sharpened conscience of devotion to Him — measured by these tests which rise out of the conditions of the hour and hang in the sky before us, our service has lagged and fallen. Though we are greater and better than ever, we are seriously inadequate for to-day and to-morrow. Our administrative system — have we anything which can be called such? — was devised for a smaller and simpler day. Henceforth details of work done locally are to be set in vast plans, constructed into a whole, directed and distributed from gathering-points and from the center of all.

Considering the erection of an adequate administrative system upon our Congregational principles and with the use of the **Upward Trend of good and fruitful forms already Organization** possessed, the first thing to notice and safeguard is the fact that our organic direction is from below upward. We do not begin with overlords, whether called bishops or superintendents or ministers. We begin with common men, free individuals, uncoerced, associating themselves in voluntary local churches, each church as free in its own domain as the souls that compose it. We

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form local churches, not by permission or order from without, but by divine grace in the heart. The primary obligation to organize ourselves into churches is duty directly to God and human need. From this principle of organization under divine constraint free of all human authority we swing our total administrative system. This sunders us radically from all systems that work from above downward, from the Papal polity surely, from the Episcopal polity almost as completely; not however from the Presbyterian polity, which begins as we do from the free individual and the local church, but further on adds elements of authority which we decline. Our distinguishing mark, therefore, from all other polities together lies beyond the formation of voluntary churches; it lies in the direct democracy and inalienable authority of the local churches. Into their private domain no hand from without can be thrust. They exercise a certain rightful power, often called authority, over their own members, based on the individual duty of uniting in churches, of staying there, and of behaving Christianly. This authority is no more than the semblance of coercion, inasmuch as a member cannot be held in membership if determined to withdraw. Authority, then, even in local churches, is only the standing affirmation of universal duty and reasonable service; it is right reason; it is personal and corporate influence uttered and exerted from one to another and by all unto each. Church

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officers are but appointed agents and channels of such quasi authority, deriving their vocation and endowment from God, their fitness from culture methods, their specific local enlistment from the churches themselves. Discipline and organized service are thus possible only as drawing all their vitality from personal loyalty to Christ translated voluntarily into terms of church-membership and work. Thus tenuous and weak appears ecclesiastical leadership when referred to its fundamentals. But so deep running and inwardly constraining is this loyalty to Christ and the Church that leadership becomes, even in our voluntary system, a noble and influential vocation, discipline a saving grace, and united action a dependable, mighty, and world-wide power.

The local church, thus principled, becomes the vital unit for all the larger forms in the polity. Out of it, not from individual Chris- **Local Church** tians, arise those larger forms. Asso- **the Vital Unit** ciations, conferences, councils, societies, National Council, all are organizations of local churches, not of individual Christians, not of independent and authoritative officials. The churches unite of their own will into all these social forms, giving to them their leadership, their standing warrant, their life itself. General order, consistency, sympathy, effective union are secured by free agreement in adopting the same forms. Similar forms and uniform terminology thus become important. The higher groups, always composed

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of churches, though acting through representatives, depend on the lower groups, as these immediately upon the churches. Thus organization proceeds from below upward, while leadership and influence are trusts and ministration, not authority and commandment. We have, moreover, a way, especially by means of local associations and councils, of keeping all the groups in intimate relations with the churches themselves, as will further appear in later lectures. This local church derivation and dependence, with the consequent procedure upward, are of prime importance to the conception and operation of our polity, and must be safeguarded in all its developments.

A second feature of our polity structure is its direct democracy, or its combination of direct **Direct** and indirect democracy. Each local **Democracy** church is a direct or pure democracy. We, the people *en masse*, handle affairs with immediate touch. Our theory is that each member be an intelligent voter and capable co-worker, able to propose, discuss and pass upon propositions, able also to carry his part of the church work as either private laborer, officer, or committeeman. Our polity calls for and promotes universal intelligence and participation. We suffer no class or order of men to monopolize capability or opportunity. We would have no man evade his share of obligation or deprive himself of privilege or reward. Nor do we surrender



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opportunity and privilege to any small body within the church. At this point we decline the company of our nearest friends, the Presbyterians, refusing to charge an annually elected session with the authoritative conduct of the church's life. Reception or dismissal of members, election of delegates to fraternal meetings, current phases and problems of local work and welfare, cases of discipline—in short, all local matters whatsoever we hold in the common hand. This is pure democracy, direct popular action upon all affairs within reach.

But not all duty is within reach of the single church and individual member. Duty stretches away in great circles to the world's **Representative Democracy** end. Affairs ecclesiastical and spiritual shape up into magnificent proportions, commensurate with affairs educational, industrial and political. Mighty forces, equipped, arrayed and directed, are required against entrenched evils and vast human needs. On that wide field direct democracy is as good as helpless. Churches serving in large bands must act by representatives. Mr. John Fiske says, "Representative government in counties is necessitated by the extent of territory covered; in cities it is necessitated by the multitude of people."<sup>1</sup> The Congregational churches, having their county, city, national and world-wide life, have been forced to develop forms of representative or indirect

<sup>1</sup> *Civil Government in the United States*, p. 101.

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democracy. This is not subversive of our original character or destructive of Congregational principles. Our safety lies in preserving in local affairs the direct action of the primary assembly. We do not substitute representative democracy; we add it and assign it its own secondary realm. We constitute and direct it from below. The local church maintains pure democracy on a better status than does the town meeting. The vital and immediate influence of the churches in all the larger interests is far greater. For us, as for all free churches and states, the problem of democracy is the mutual adjustment of pure and representative democracy. We must cease to fear the latter. We must hold it in firm control, but give it worthy and fruitful development.

This brings us to a third consideration regarding our proposed adequate administrative system. Our representative bodies, from the local associations and councils up to the National Council, are administrative only. Mr. Heermance has given us the freshest discussion of this matter, comparing the Congregational polity with others in respect to the three possible functions—legislative, judicial and administrative—of representative bodies. Congregationalism began right, and has continued so, in excluding all provision for legislative and judicial procedure. None of our representative bodies are permitted to so much as enter those domains, lest we suffer in-

**Administration  
the Sole  
Function**

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sensible encroachments of authority. But in our terror of that, we have deprived ourselves of the administrative function to a point far below efficiency. Herein, says Mr. Heermance, we are two-thirds right and one-third wrong. It is evident now in the growing light that we need not remain even one-third wrong. We may safely correct our administrative mistake. "If we bear in mind," adds Mr. Heermance, "that legislation and judicature have no place in the Church, in general bodies or anywhere else, the liberties of the churches are entirely safe."<sup>1</sup>

In the administrative function there is no inevitable impairment of personal liberty and local independence. These latter the Congregational polity is prepared to pre-serve and guarantee under whatever development of an administrative system. For the native possessors of authority — individual Christians and local churches—do not surrender it. Our representative bodies are granted, not power over the churches, but leadership of the churches. In the first place, they are given specific tasks, definite and circumscribed kinds of work to do, like the organization of the church or the ordination of a minister. Some would hold these bodies quite strictly to prescribed tasks. Dr. Mackennal seems to do so, when he says, "It must be borne in mind that the representatives of the churches . . . are constituted simply to fulfil the spe-

<sup>1</sup> *Democracy in the Church*, pp. 102, 103.

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cific charges committed to them.”<sup>1</sup> Such limits, however, are too strait for efficiency and even for liberty. Members of Congregational churches do not surrender the native right of individual and collective initiative when they sit as representatives in administrative bodies. We expect initiative of such bodies. They are to lead off in the larger fields for which they were created. The further they can see and lead forward the better. But here is the safeguard: these bodies are not, as already remarked, allowed authority over the churches. We constitute no body with power to coerce us, or to go forward or back without us. Apart from us they can do nothing, as certain of our higher Congregational bodies are in tedious process of discovering. Moreover, the creative hand of the churches keeps a disciplinary and even a destructive hold upon its own agencies. Their personnel is in constant flux, their constitutions are exposed to precipitate alteration, their very life is not immortal and may be snuffed out. And furthermore — and this is the most practical thing of all — the churches preserve the right of initiative and the power to work their will through their representatives. Constraint and coercion and authority work, not back upon the churches, but from the churches; and they work. The representative bodies must and will do the bidding of the churches. The latter, when convinced and ready, are able to ef-

<sup>1</sup> *The Witness of Congregationalism*, pp. 25, 26.

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fect their purpose. This is the point of safety and power.

A striking article appeared in the columns of the *New York Independent*, October 22, 1908, from the pen of Delos F. Wilcox, **Popular Initiative and Progress** Ph.D., wherein the author delineated the undemocratic development of our representative political forms, and the enslaving pass to which we have come. His conclusion is this: "The next step forward in the program of political development is the democratization of the forms of government. All other issues pale into insignificance before this. Shall the people be able to exercise political initiative and crystallize their intelligence into progress?"<sup>1</sup> In this most gracious and potent liberty we of the Congregational polity live and labor in religion. We are entirely able to exercise initiative and crystallize our intelligence into progress. We have no provisions, nor will we consent to any, whereby our representative bodies can ever despoil us of this free power of popular initiative and control. Secure in this possession, we need not hesitate to develop an adequate administrative system and keep it adequate to the advancing day.

A fourth characteristic of our polity is found in the fact that our administrative force is public opinion or right reason. There are **Public Opinion** other phrases for it, such as public **our Force** sentiment, general consent. It is more than

<sup>1</sup> *Independent*, p. 924.

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truth; it is a certain employment of truth. It is common acknowledgment of truth in general and a specific truth in hand, with the active adoption of the latter as a measure; it is general agreement that that is the right thing to do and this the proper time to do it. To the authoritative polities this seems no power at all, the absence of power rather, a helpless and tedious way of leaving things to work themselves out. To us the method seems of the very essence of freedom, and as sure as the mills of God. They who cannot abide it must foregather elsewhere. For this is really our method and our power. We are forever repeating that we have no authority which can outrun our public opinion. Our sole method is general education, approximately universal, on any measure before us, and the resultant crystallization of conviction and purpose regarding it. It is a slow process. We die pitifully often with the desire of our hearts unfulfilled. But the method is heaven's own, and counts one day as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. When you get the reasoned conviction and consequent deliberate action of a large body of intelligent and conscientious men, you have the finest fruit of personality, the closest human approach to truth and righteousness, and the mightiest force under the skies. The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table rises to remark that the essence of real democracy "is not in forms of government, but in the omnipotence

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of public opinion that grows out of it.”<sup>1</sup> Our leaders should always catch the potent enthusiasms of this method, for our people never will yield an inch in the direction of any other method. You can do what you will with Congregationalists whom you can convince and persuade, but you have no other hope.

Let us notice how much is involved in this method. The point to be reached in every practical issue is twofold: (a) Ac- **Majority and**  
tive agreement of a majority, and **Minority**  
(b) acquiescence and cooperation of the minority. This is the lowest point of public opinion; until you have reached this, you have no force for starting the issue before you. And this majority agreement and minority acquiescence may be a very low point indeed and equally weak force. On the other hand, the crystallization may take place at high temperature, generating irresistible energy, whether with large or small majority.

Our theory, however, is unanimity, not majority and minority. We seek the instruction, conviction and unanimous action of the **Unanimity our**  
total constituency involved. We **Theory and**  
labor and wait for this, believing in **Method**  
it, knowing it to be the highest reservoir of power. Our system stands for the utmost absence of unwelcome coercion, though it should be but the carrying away of a small minority by

<sup>1</sup> The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table, p. 35.

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a great majority on a trivial issue. And we believe that what is true and wise ought to be, and at length will be, unanimously accepted. We are, on the other hand, quite accustomed to the power of minorities to hinder or to mar, even to hold the real truth and carry it finally to victory. They can delay, prevent, or render futile the truest or wisest measures, and have been known to do so. They can enforce their will on the principle of *noblesse oblige*; the majority will wait for time and reason, or will even give up the whole issue. The minority will often split the body or withdraw rather than acquiesce in a decision however fairly and patiently reached; and the majority is sometimes right in counting the loss of the issue in dispute less grievous than a breach in the body. We are so accustomed to these administrative phases that illustrations are needless. It often seems as if Congregational procedure were by minorities, not by majorities; it is almost true that minorities rule. The pursuit of unanimity, with constant fraternal regard for the slow, the unwilling, the blind, the unheeding, the self-conscious, is an ideal pursuit, producing high and generous character; but its threat to block all progress must not be endured.

A chapter on the virtues and duties of Congregational minorities is due in our polity manuals. The rule is not too rigid that minorities, whether of one or of hundreds, should yield and cooperate except in extreme cases of principle.



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And it should be added that extreme cases of principle are rarer in administrative affairs than heated litigants are apt to imagine. Many a question of practical procedure is erected into a moral test of immortality. The conscience is a different faculty from the will; a moral judgment other than an obstinate preference. Great relief is possible in our polity at this point of the duty of minorities upon administrative measures which contain no hint of legislative or judicial authority.

A fifth and final point to consider respecting an adequate administrative system is the importance of achieving national unity. I **National Unity** am aware that some brethren who **to be Achieved** would agree with most that has been said thus far might take fright at so ambitious a phrase. Yet should we not despair of securing unanimity for this higher and stronger thing. The foregoing discussion has been in vain if the cry of danger to our liberties is raised here. And the appeal for efficiency is vain if a denominational halt be called this side of an all-inclusive and enduring unity. Mr. John Fiske has put our case in a brilliant sentence in his volume, "The Beginnings of New England." He says, "Our experience has now so far widened that we can see . . . that the only perdurable government must be that which succeeds in achieving national unity on a grand scale, without weakening the sense of personal and local independence."<sup>1</sup> Our Congregational

<sup>1</sup>The Beginnings of New England, p. 23.

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problem could not be better stated, only substituting the word organization for the word government — “the only perdurable organization must be that which succeeds in achieving national unity on a grand scale without weakening the sense of personal and local independence.” Mr. Fiske was an old-line Congregationalist in thus insisting on local independence and a new-line Congregationalist in affirming national unity. We have the independence, safe and stable; we must achieve the unity if we would endure. No voice is clearer or stronger than Mr. Fiske’s, but the chorus is already large and inspiring. The Rev. D. Macfadyen in his “Constructive Congregational Ideals” gives us excellent statements by himself and other writers. “Those,” he says, “who understand the Congregational ideal best in England and the United States have maintained . . . that for the expression of the common spirit and sacrificial life of our churches our existing organizations are inadequate. Large investments are required for large tasks. As the churches first themselves now confronted by duties on the scale of a nation and an empire, . . . it has become necessary to find suitable administrative and executive instruments for the tasks which have fallen to them.”<sup>1</sup> Again he speaks of certain addresses printed in his volume as “alike in adopting what for want of a better phrase is commonly called the statesman’s point

<sup>1</sup> Constructive Congregational Ideals, pp. 9-11.

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of view — that is, they grasp the life of the denomination as a whole and try to shape it in the light of the higher politics of the kingdom of God. . . . They assume that it is possible to prepare ourselves both in spirit and method for a more united, disciplined and organized service of Christ in the nation and the kingdom of God than we have yet accomplished.”<sup>1</sup> “Who,” exclaims another, “shall demonstrate the important theorem — how without abandoning a single principle we shall gain firm cohesion and multiplied strength; how we may learn to exist, no longer as comminuted particles which the wind of events may drive away, but as a whole mass, separate in its organization, but confederate in its united action; free from tyranny and free from slavery, a great, united, cooperating Christian body.”<sup>2</sup> “If Congregationalism,” continues the same writer, “be incapable of a large and generous union, it lacks an important element of spiritual power; whilst, if it be capable of it, it must needs put forth means and agencies which have hitherto been unfamiliar.”<sup>3</sup>

These quotations might be buttressed by many more. We are aware how frequently the subject finds expression in our religious **Toward Unity** papers and programs. We are far **and Order** from unanimity, but we are discussing and experimenting from Maine to California, and all

<sup>1</sup> **Constructive Congregational Ideals**, pp. 17, 18.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 60, 61.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 57, 58.

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movement is toward unity and order; no instance of the opposite procedure has come to my attention. By an overwhelming majority we intend to achieve national unity. We like to feel already the strengthening cords and bands, the touch of shoulders, the eye to eye, the impulse of vast affairs, the thrill of being one and mighty. Throughout the land we are responsive to the stroke of such words as Mr. Fiske's upon the Congregational conscience. And it is good for us just now to iterate and reiterate from ocean to ocean and from lakes to gulf this call of the hour, till "the subliminal self" catches the suggestion. "The only perdurable organization must be that which succeeds in achieving national unity on a grand scale without weakening the sense of personal and local independence." This is the complete significance of an adequate administrative system, one that adjusts us to this national and international age, this interdenominational and missionary age, this age which reads undismayed the duty of world evangelization and the transformation of total humanity into the Kingdom of God. Though we did not mean to be, we have been weak and backward, we lovers of our separate ways; we must achieve unity, and coin our corporate power into reconstructed manhood and social order.

Does it not follow from the course of our discussion that Congregationalism has a real administrative problem to solve, the task of constructing

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new and enlarged denominational machinery? There are times in religion — and the present is one of them for us Congregation- **A Real Problem** alists — when outward matters of **in Administration** organization and method are the necessity of the hour. The criticism is neither false nor superficial that we have confined ourselves too exclusively to the individual and spiritual side of our church life. It is always and everywhere true that the spiritual is the paramount issue; it is not true always and everywhere that it can successfully be given exclusive pursuit. Spiritual forces have regard to the fitness of human agencies. We may not expect God to do mighty spiritual works in our deliberate neglect of resources and strategy. And we properly charge with error those who find nothing to do in the Kingdom of Christ but to convert sinners by evangelistic methods and edify saints by spiritual instruction and moral suasion. There are magnificent and awful things to do which require more exterior ministration, such as cleansing filthy homes, running a juvenile court, electing clean and capable civic officials, succoring earthquake-stricken Italy, distributing world-wide streams of religion charged full with education and civilized ways. Unorganized men or churches, taking hold as each will, cannot do this greater work and do it all and do it all the time. Nothing can effect it save the studied array and strategic deployment of

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mighty forces, of all the forces there are. This is forgotten when in a low day the cry is raised that nothing is necessary but more spirituality and evangelism, purer doctrine, restored faith in the Bible, deeper loyalty to Christ. These do not always come at call. They are hindered now by our disturbed and protesting attention to administration. We are not free-minded for our spiritual work. The remedy lies, not in absorbed, unorganized devotion to the spiritual; that would throw us the more out of joint with the modern world. It lies in solving the outer problems, until soon, adjusted in ways suitable to the new day, we find "a heart at leisure from itself" and recover "the joy of the working."

Such development of our administrative system must be the general concern. It has already been noticed that in a democracy the cultivation of patriotic citizenship and the service of the State are universal duties. It has been well said that a democracy never enjoys the rule of the best, but only of the average man. Transfer the administration to the few best, and you convert your democracy into an aristocracy. Preserve your democracy by all means, cultivate and qualify the average ability, extend the general participation. Congregationalists everywhere should give its due measure of thoughtful effort to polity.

Nor is this so superficial and unworthy as

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deemed by some. Its honorable character is seen in the State, where it is accounted a principal department of study and action, one of the highest vocations. The statesman and the political economist are not working directly upon character. Their service to manhood is indirect. But though they hold no evangelistic services, they are endlessly evangelizing. You do not think of Abraham Lincoln as a mere administrator — the phrase often becomes a sneer upon Congregational lips — nor Theodore Roosevelt, nor President Taft, nor Governor Hughes, nor Everett Colby, nor Uren of Oregon; nor in education, the presidents of our colleges and secondary schools; nor in our Church, Leonard Bacon, nor H. M. Dexter, nor A. H. Quint, nor the secretaries of our national societies. Administrative work done with vision and heart is worthy of the best man's part, is filled with the spirit of worship, serves the Kingdom of heaven at principal points, greatens the servants, organizes the progress of mankind. Polity is intimately interwoven with doctrine, as Professor Ladd and others have taken pains to show. At its source our Congregational organization flows out of our democratic conception of the ways of God with man. An aristocratic and mediative conception of the Holy Spirit gives an aristocratic polity. Nor can the deep influence of organization and administration upon personal and social character, in either State or Church, be

**Administration  
Worthy and  
Honorable**

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overlooked. We of this land of the free church and the free state know what we can do in a few decades in the Philippines for peoples just released from four hundred years of lordliness and degradation. Dr. R. W. Dale wrote that questions of organization and polity "cannot be evaded or postponed. Ecclesiastical institutions are at once an expression and a discipline of the character of the churches. The connection between organization and life is never accidental or arbitrary."<sup>1</sup> We ought not to speak with a sneer or even lightness, adds Mr. Macfadyen, of "mere matters of organization. It would be as reasonable for the soul to speak of mere matters of the body. . . . It is true that a soul may live and triumph over manifest infirmities and deficiencies; and this is very much what the Congregational ideal has done with its very defective organization for more than two hundred years. But part of the duty which our churches owe to the principles and ideals they inherit is to give them the solid assistance of an effective business management and practical organization."<sup>2</sup> Here, then, is the need of this hour for Congregationalists — "an adequate administrative system," "achieving national unity without weakening the sense of personal and local independence." In words historic and immortal, "we can if we will."

<sup>1</sup> Congregational Church Polity, pp. 3, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Constructive Congregational Ideals, pp. 44-47.



LECTURE II  
MINISTERIAL LEADERSHIP



## II

### MINISTERIAL LEADERSHIP

IN our Congregational theory the Church is first of all, composed of ordinary men and women who love our Lord Jesus Christ and unite for service in his name. This theory, as held in completeness and consistency by us, distinguishes our polity. Out of the Church comes the specialized ministry of religion. Needing instructors and leaders, the Church lays hands on a sufficient number and puts them forth. They in turn are evermore responsible to the Church and depend upon her for opportunity and resources. The Church is first, the ministry second and subordinate.

In practical administration, however, the ministry leads. Scarcely an individual church anywhere is organized apart from its agency. The machinery of the Kingdom is in its hands even to an unfortunate degree. **Primacy of Leadership** This leadership of a class of men is inevitable and not to be deplored. No more than the State, can the Church prosper save by competent and devoted leaders. The primacy of leadership among practical problems of administration needs emphasis, but not argument. Mr. John R. Mott, in his latest volume, "The Future Leadership of the Church," is saying, "Wherever the Church has proved inadequate, it has been due to inadequate leadership.

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. . . The failure to raise up a competent ministry would be a far greater failure than not to win converts to the faith, because the enlargement of the Kingdom ever waits for leaders of power. . . . To secure able men for the Christian ministry is an object of transcendent, urgent, and world-wide concern. It involves the life, the growth, the extension of the Church — the future of Christianity itself.”<sup>1</sup>

At the present moment we Congregationalists — and others with us — are convicted of remissness and consequent weakness on this principal point. Our problem of leadership is affecting to an alarming degree our whole enterprise. It has been for some years a low time with regard to our ministry. Full ranks of young men have not been coming. Too few of the best equipped men have come. We are painfully aware of a low conception of the ministry among college students. The phases and causes of this situation have been much in print, and are freshly given in Mr. Mott's volume. There are this year encouraging signs that the tide will make in again, but it is too soon to predict this with assurance.

Primary responsibility for its leadership rests upon the Church. It may not be discharged upon **The Church Pri-** the ministry, nor upon the **marily Responsible** young men in colleges, nor even upon the Christian home. This mighty institution named the Church, whose exist-

<sup>1</sup>The Future Leadership of the Church, pp. 3, 4.

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ence, prosperity and usefulness absolutely depend, under God, upon its leadership, should maintain measures adequate to insure that leadership. Its best agency for this is the Christian home. At this time the Church and the home are not furnishing the conditions and motives which, when present, will always carry a sufficient number of their sons into the ministry. That vocation is now discredited in the minds of great numbers of Christian parents and church-members, and hence inevitably in the minds of the boys and young men. Mr. Mott's unequalled observation leads him to testify that increasing numbers of Christian parents and church-members in the evangelical churches generally do not care to have their sons enter the ministry, are not thinking them prayerfully on in that direction, but are actively turning them toward other vocations. This atmosphere cannot be kept negative, leaving young men unaffected to reach an unbiased decision. Indeed, there is little scruple about making it affirmative and influential. Until it is corrected the best hope tarries. Until the ministry is restored to its sacred place in the regard of church-members and parents, no formal measures can contend successfully for recruits. Nor is there any correction of this state of things save by what the psychologists are calling re-education. The mind of the Church and the home, now working too habitually away from the ministry, must be restored to a favorable

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habit. It is a case for mental and spiritual healing — disclaiming the technical meaning of the phrase.

But now, having laid this obligation where it fundamentally belongs, upon the Church as an **Ministry Mainly** institution, upon Christians and **Responsible** church-members in general, upon parents and teachers and church officers in particular, I feel like throwing it specifically upon the ministry itself. When you are not theorizing, but urging practical measures, you have to say that in every department of human activity results depend upon the leaders of action. Theirs is the prime responsibility for the long working of cause and effect. The ministry of the Church is definitely responsible for its own numbers and quality. The reeducation of the Church and the home on this subject is its task. And prior to that it has to rectify its own state of mind. For at the present time the ministry is not warmly accrediting and sustaining its own craft, is not exalting its own vocation, is not crying with an exultant challenge to the young men, including its own sons. Here as elsewhere statements must be careful, and the appeal is to your general observation. On that basis, and on suggestive evidence appearing time by time in our religious journals, are we not within bounds in saying that there is in the minds and homes of ministers themselves wide-spread reluctance to have their own sons follow them?

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Mr. Mott says: "Even ministers and their wives, in an increasing number of cases, are not encouraging their sons to consider this calling. Far too frequently they positively discourage such serious consideration."<sup>1</sup> If this is true, there is much to be said in palliation and even justification of special cases; there is also much to be said to the Church about suffering such a state of things, such treatment of its leaders, as would justify any number of them in reaching this state of mind. But my contention at this moment is this, that such a minister, or such a group of ministers, is both unfit and unwilling to lead other men's sons into the ministry, unfit and unwilling to reeducate the Church and the home on the subject. The case must remain lean and unhopeful so long and so far as the ministers of Christ remain heavy-laden and dispirited with their task, so far as they judge it by its incidentals, so far as its great visions fail them, so far as they cannot lay upon their own sons first and then on others a hand of joy unspeakable and full of glory. ✓

And now — for we are in the domain of administration — it is urged that Congregationalists should take constructive **Adequate Measures** for sustaining their **Required** ministerial leadership at its highest point of efficiency. We certainly have no adequate measures at present. Far too little is being

<sup>1</sup> Future Leadership of the Church, p. 96.

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done, and most of that is volunteer effort, partial and unrelated. The Congregational denomination as such, with a national life and world-wide service, is conducting no apparatus for assuring its own permanent power through adequate leadership. It is wonderful that we fare on as well as we do. But are we not arriving at that administrative consciousness which would take earnest measures to restore conditions and develop provisions? It is time that the Congregational Church undertook its ministerial leadership in large-minded, far-reaching and patient plans.

What, then, have we to do that may be said to require so much? We have, in brief phrase, to reeducate our churches, to rectify conditions, and then to go out after the best young men in our colleges and homes.

I. First in the order of a minister's career stands his theological training. Our schools of **Congregational Divinity Schools** theology possess the confidence of churches and ministry to a high degree. There is, of course, distressed and militant criticism; there are also better grades of the same fabric, not less firm, but inwrought with courtesy, faith and cheer. There are improvements and enrichments always due in theological training. It is desirable that these be pressed upon the seminaries, for vested interests incline to slow down into security and comfort. But criticism and impulse are in no danger of failing from the ecclesiastical earth.



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What, then, should our churches, as organized into a branch of the Church of Christ, do for and with the seminaries? The question of denominational control, perhaps, comes first to mind. There is excellent historical counsel on this subject. It is vital to both churches and seminaries to enjoy unreserved intimacy together. The mutual benefits are too obvious for rehearsal. The seminaries draw their life from the Church and the Kingdom, and exist solely to serve these. Administrative control by the organized churches is logical and practical, even in Congregationalism; its absence looks strange to many eyes, but this also is very Congregational. Local autonomy here does not imperil great interests, while it makes for that priceless thing, the freedom of the truth. Advance has come and must come through the fearless pioneering of men who grow used to the wide horizon. But, short of control, the association of churches and ministers with the theological schools should be perfect, promoted on both sides with perseverance and love. Each should offer the other all possible service. Each should be sure of the other's readiness. The active exchange should be continuous and whole-hearted.

Given intimate association and sturdy criticism, there is but one further requisite for assuring continuous improvement **Increased** and adaptation in our ministerial **Endowments** training. That one essential is ample resources.

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The same old cry, to be sure, simply because there is no other cry and no adequate response to this one. The required advances in training none see more sanely or desire more ardently than our seminary faculties and trustee boards. Give them power to do always the better thing, and they will do it; any timorous or indolent reluctance is easily overcome.

Down to almost the present hour in Congregational administration, financial action has been entirely local, individual and voluntary. A better day has dawned. Witness our scheme of proportionate benevolence, here at last and here to stay. We are reducing to system the use of money in the service of God; the day of sentimental disorder is declining. Into this process our theological institutions should be admitted. Endorsement of the seminaries by the National Council and other denominational bodies as conspicuous parts of our machinery requiring provision adequate to extreme efficiency would sound an urgent note in the ears of our generous givers. Enormous gifts go annually into education. No proper proportion of these is for theological education. If one or two of our seminaries are amply endowed through private generosity, the rest are straitened and strained well-nigh to the breaking point. Our churches want the finest young men out of the best equipped colleges of the land. They cannot have them unless they enable their professional schools to equal, in their

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own department, the amplitude, the freedom, the pedagogical quality to which the young men have become accustomed in the colleges. The lack at present is not in the methods in vogue in our theological halls, nor in the men who labor there; it is in the financial inability of these alert and eager men to develop the methods.

II. Considering conditions in the ministry which need attention and repair, the first is that of the minister's salary. This is doubtless to **Salaries** be regarded as the lowest thing of all but it cannot be belittled out of sight. Recently the Rev. Jonathan Hardup and his friends have been expressing breezy and not at all sordid opinions in our religious papers. The National Council at its Cleveland meeting passed an earnest resolution that better financial support of the ministry be urged upon the churches. Several important articles during recent years in our magazine literature have discussed this factor in the situation; none so frankly and justly as Mr. Mott's volume, to which frequent reference is being made in this lecture. The cost of education for the ministry and of living as ministers must live, is steadily increasing. The special demands upon the parson's purse are not only greater than formerly, but greater in proportion to his income than upon any other person in the community. His salary has not risen proportionately; in many communities it has declined. "Thousands of ministers receive stipends which amount to less than the

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wages of day laborers." Nor is the meager salary always paid promptly, while some of it is never paid. This financial injustice constitutes a main deterrent from the ministry. It acts upon the young men themselves, and still more forcibly upon their parents. But it were well if the churches could understand *how* it acts. It is no matter of shrewd commercial calculation. In this question are involved high interests and sacred values, such as a minister's financial integrity and standing in the community, his personal growth by means of books and meetings and travel, his mental ease and freedom for the high levels whereon lies the significance of religious work, his ability to create and sustain a home, the education of his children, his provision for sickness and old age. All these and other things belong inherently to manhood; they are human, not merely professional. And being human, they are not to be nullified by professional conditions.

Now the rub comes at the point of discovery that these financial conditions of the ministry are **Wrong** unnecessary and morally wrong. **Conditions** Neither consecrated young men nor their parents are afraid of poverty. Ministers who are worth while do not abandon the ministry through love of money. Necessary and fruitful sacrifice commands as much heroism as ever. But the current financial conditions of the ministry are not necessary, and

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submission to them is ceasing to be heroic. "Men," says Mr. Mott, "are not less heroic than of old; but they have knowledge and discernment, and they see that it is not poverty, but carelessness and selfishness that dictate the financial provision for many ministers to-day."<sup>1</sup> This means that the pastor's work may lie among men and women who will discredit him in advance for accepting an unworthy and ineffective situation, who will be by so much less accessible to the high impulses which he brings, who will, worst of all, be so far forth themselves unfit to constitute a sacrificial force for Christ and righteousness. Less wonder, in this view of the facts, that the young man shuns the barren sacrifice, and that his parents, living in a parsonage, perhaps, are sadly silent as he turns away.

The aim of this moment is less to describe this situation than to urge denominational action to correct what has grown to be a great **How Correct** wrong. In the unequal local con- **the Wrong** ditions of our churches the difficulty cannot be conquered separately. Cooperative effort is required upon a denominational and even an interdenominational scale. Example and stimulus are given us by our English brethren. The Congregational Union of England and Wales at its meeting in May, 1909, adopted with enthusiasm a plan for raising and

<sup>1</sup> Future Leadership of the Church, p. 93.

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administering "the Central Fund for Ministerial Support." The amount to be raised is not less than two hundred and fifty thousand pounds. It will be vested in The Congregational Union of England and Wales, Incorporated, and be controlled by the Council of the Union in accordance with the careful terms of the Central Fund Scheme. The object is "the better support of the recognized ministry of the Union, until an adequate minimum stipend shall be secured for all accredited ministers in charge," after which the Fund shall also be available for grants to ministers temporarily without charge and ministers superannuated. The Union has taken this radical step believing "that once this primary problem is satisfactorily dealt with, the seriousness of other denominational difficulties will be largely relieved." It may be added that the Baptist body in England has formulated an equally thoroughgoing provision for ministerial support. These examples, afforded by bodies standing equally with us for local autonomy, we Congregationalists ought soon to imitate. Our primary problem is the same and calls for similar denominational action. Yet even then it will remain inadequate to repair insufficient salaries out of a national Congregational treasury. The trouble is enormously augmented by sectarianism and the financial waste in overchurched communities. We must agree with Mr. Mott's conclusion, when he says:

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“Nothing is clearer than that the different Christian communions should deal thoroughly with the problem of insuring adequate salaries for their ministers, and that the various Christian bodies unitedly should agree on a policy which would do away with the unnecessary multiplication and unwise distribution of churches.”<sup>1</sup>

III. Close to this matter of adequate salaries lies that of putting within the reach of our ministers the means of sustaining their “The Doom of mental and spiritual power. In- Leadership” creased salaries, even if they came at once wherever needed, would not obviate this further requirement. The draught upon the pastor’s thought and vitality is incessant and uncalculating. His sustained intellectual production is equaled by no other man in the community. His sympathies may never cease to flow, for human need holds the spigot open night and day. It is Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes who says, better lose a pint of blood than have a nerve tapped. Dr. Charles Cuthbert Hall, in a lecture from this platform, thus presented in thrilling words “the doom of leadership”:

“He who has borne the burden and heat of the day learns in bitterness of soul the doom of leadership. To stand in the midst of the *ecclesia*, with the ordinary vicissitudes of man’s life transpiring upon one’s self from day to day, its variations of mental activity, its episodes of spiritual depression, its yoke of earthly care, its fettering relationships, and yet to behold a thousand souls assembled and waiting for inspiration from one soul; to be conscious per-

<sup>1</sup> Future Leadership of the Church, p. 94.

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petually of this silent demand upon one's selfhood; to know that life must be maintained at the giving point, at the point of spiritual exaltation, where influence is generated for the uplift of many souls; to look into the faces of men and women gathered in the house of God, and to see in some the hunger of expectation that must be fed, in others the absence of energy that must be supplied — that is the doom of leadership."<sup>1</sup>

Every faithful pastor is consciously living this doom; many are living it with a disheartening sense of untimely, unforeseen and unnecessary defeat. Within a few weeks a pastor in New England has been reported unable to buy a single book since his graduation from the theological school several years ago. It is a confession of gathering tragedy. The greater tragedy is found in the large numbers of such pastors dwelling amid the dulness of church-members who do not buy books themselves and do not realize the minister's need. You may find in every state numbers of pastors, not all so-called home missionaries, who, not one year, but year after year, cannot afford to attend their State Conference and often are embarrassed to attend their local Association. Again the laymen who never think of going are blind to the worth of such privileges to the pastor's brain and heart.

These are two main points among others in which our ministry suffers and declines. Corporate duty, ecclesiastical strategy and brotherly love unite in demanding organized effort to turn back this ebbing tide of power. Nor should it

<sup>1</sup> *Qualifications for Ministerial Power*, p. 173.



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be done with an eye solely to individual pastors, though with personal regard for each one. It must be the action of a great branch of the Church of Christ providing for its own leadership for the ends of the Kingdom. We cannot let our leaders go unnourished. We cannot afford to leave our corporate life in the hands of weak men; and the case is worse when inherently strong men go weak through lack of sustenance than when weak men are enabled to do their best; it is the latter situation on which the divine blessing may be expected.

If it be asked what can be done on this line, the answer is in part ready; correspondence courses of study and reading, summer schools or institutes, circulating libraries, pastoral tours through remote regions, such as have proved so profitable in New York State, pastoral exchanges between centers and circumference. A great body of churches administering cordially such a purpose will not be at a loss for timely measures. Pastors who are unable to buy books must be provided with them by gift or loan. Pastors whose studious opportunities were brief and habits poorly formed must be given further training. Pastors who cannot reach the stimulating atmosphere of our Congregational meetings, our large churches and our mighty cities must be brought there or have the energy of these transported to them. We cannot afford, for the sake of our

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corporate well-being, in duty to the Kingdom, to let our leaders stop reading and learning and thinking and greeting the new morning with a cheer. Hitherto it has been almost completely left to the individual, solitary there in his isolated parish. It has been every man for himself, and when he can no longer keep the pace, Christ have mercy on him! A beginning of better fraternity and strategy has been made. About a dozen states have arranged courses of reading which are recommended to partially trained men, but which are confessedly of small value. There are summer schools and institutes here and there, useful, but limited. Some of our seminaries earnestly try to make their resources helpful, as when Andover assembles the home missionary pastors of Massachusetts for ten days of instruction and spiritual uplift, or when Hartford invites pastors and physicians to a course of lectures on Religion and Medicine, or when Atlanta maintains continual plans which carry her influence throughout the Gulf States. In many sections surely, though I have meager reports thereon, at least a little is done to give men the privilege of attending state meetings or district congresses, or to visit the cities, touch the pulse-beat of the great churches, and catch step with the marching throng. At this moment, as often in these lectures, I find myself speaking as a westerner in eastern conditions where my words sound alien and irrelevant. Does any pastor in New Eng-

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land need to be helped to a city or to a central meeting? Lacking railroad fares, he finds the walking short. In California — and to some degree in other states — we have pastors whose fares to San Francisco are from \$15 to \$25 each way, and the running time a night and a day. A Sunday exchange is far beyond reach; the visit of a fellow minister rarer than other theophanies. Leave such pastors to themselves, and your prayers for them ring hollow. Leave them to themselves, and your devotion to home missions, to the growth of Congregational power, to the advance of the Kingdom, lacks wisdom at a main point.

In fine, the personal welfare and industrial efficiency of our ministers through the burden and heat of the day are coming to form a chief concern of our churches. In part by increased salaries, in part by methods of intellectual and spiritual supply, we purpose to do tardy justice to those who go out under the crushing ends of our common load, we purpose to organize victory in regions where we have remained indifferent to inefficiency or defeat. The National Council, at its Cleveland meeting in 1907, projected action along several specific lines and appointed a Commission on Ministerial Education, with which our theological faculties are heartily cooperating.

IV. When we organize the case of our professional leaders, we shall not stop short of an-

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other provision, viz., that of support in sickness and old age. In this we are behind other **For Sickness and Old Age** branches of the Church — of course we are; this is corporate work, and we have been individualists. Now we all know in what caustic language this matter can be attacked by a well-to-do individualist, and in what cold and unsympathetic words the argument can be laid against pauperizing manhood. But there stands here a problem in righteousness and brotherhood, to be solved without prejudice, with appreciation of fortitude and sacrifice in terribly stringent conditions, and with a sharp conscience of justice instead of charity.

What does the Church demand of its ministers? Nothing, some one replies: the young man **Ministry a Vocation** who enters the ministry takes his own risks and must not complain. Happily this is not the universal reply, and yet many of us have fallen in with it, and the age has dropped toward a commercial conception of the ministry. But God will never suffer the conception to prevail. If this matter of the Church and her leaders is a business matter, it is spiritual business. It is engaged with God upon the spirit of man. The ministry is a vocation. The Church recognizes the divine call and adjusts her call to that. The Church cannot take pleasure in that easy running in and out of the ministry of which we see lamentably much

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to-day. It is not a business or profession to be lightly assumed with a calculating eye and presently to be discarded as unprosperous. It is the highest of vocations, to be entered with a lifelong purpose and uncalculating devotion. The Church demands the entire life of her ministers, their undivided attention and their unswerving purpose unto death; and quality of ministerial work is clearly seen to be in direct proportion to such unreserved and dateless consecration. With less than this churches often put up, but the Church is never satisfied. Really providential interruptions are understood; but the Church's conception of the sacred calling stands at the ideal height, and the Church's demands upon her ministers abate nothing from the man's total gift of himself and all that he hath.

Now the Church knows well enough where this brings a minister out in old age. He has made no material provision for himself; he could not; the Church would not permit him; it would not even allow him normal self-preservation; he is worn out untimely, and a younger man is called to his parsonage and pulpit — "Business is business!" Oh, but our vaunted individualism has led to such heartless evictions of faithful servants and such shameless denials of corporate responsibility for our brethren! Even now, with our clearer vision, we are making no haste to rectify our action, as our state and national funds for ministerial relief pitifully show. But the better

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days will come, more dutiful on our part as a church, more sustained and relieved for servants of Christ worn out in the warfare.

It is a day of old-age pensions. The British and German governments exhibit them on the largest scales, while they are seen on all sides in smaller forms. More centralized denominations than ourselves have this provision in full operation for their ministries. We must follow them, for we cannot come near meeting the case by enlarged salaries. The Central Fund Scheme of the Congregational Union of England and Wales already looks in this direction.

But one thing we must cease; we must cease calling this a charity; it is not charity, it is *quid Ministerial Relief pro quo*; it is well-earned pay-  
**not Charity** ment for labor rendered; it is barely living wages for a life clean fore-spent in our service. Our gifts cannot match the desert. God will assure "the wages of going on and not to die." But let us meanwhile give the bread and water, yea, the butter and honey, in a way worthier of us and of them. A comparison is sometimes made, in a way that seems to me mistaken, between the ministry and the army and navy. There is more of a parallelism here than is usually stated. The government pays more adequate salaries and retires its officers on half pay, because, it is said, the government gets the total service of the life, whereas the Church cannot command this. I sub-

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mit that this is blinking facts and obligation. From the hour when the young man enters the pastorate, and shall we not say when he enters the seminary, the Church commands his total sacrificial service under a command more regal and a constraint more potent than those of the State. In daily quality, in faithfulness, in completeness of sacrifice the Church gets a service unmatched by the State; the State's servants give nobly, even Christianly in many cases, but the Church's servants give *more* divinely, for their lives run nearer God's. But my point is that you call for their all, and you get it; *you get it*; the cases wherein you do not get it are beneath notice. When, then, the State's faithful servants are retiring in fair measure of comfort on half pay, how shall your spiritual servants fare? Pittance doled out to extreme cases of privation, and to such only, cannot truthfully be called proper returns for service rendered or gifts at all worthy of the giving Church. The trouble is not with the committees which administer the funds; the trouble is with the funds. This matter must be shaped up on higher principles than the mere prevention of starvation. Far more than that is due to the sick or aged servant himself and his family. And beyond the obligation to him and them stretches the large matter of administrative wisdom. The ministry as a factor in our church life, deprived of the means of self-provision, must not be left to run out into an old age beginning earlier than

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in other callings and wandering off into cool dismissal, neglect and oblivion. It is more than injustice; it is poor policy. The evils of it do not escape the young men we want in the ministry, do not fail to affect the total product of church work, and surely do not meet the approval of the Judge who doeth right.

I would not be understood to mean that the Church should bring all its ministers under the working of such a policy. It could not, for *they would* not. Most of them manage to escape this recourse. As we do justice in other respects, a smaller proportion will need it. Perhaps it can one day be brought well-nigh to an end. Meanwhile the high potencies of Christian manhood will continue to carry our ministers and their families bravely, and for the most part silently, through.

V. There are other things to be done toward restoring our ministry to its place of power. General conditions vitally affecting pastoral efficiency, felt by many ministers, perceived by young men looking that way, can be much improved. Some of them are actually better than reported; in these cases the facts need to be shown up.

Freedom of thought and speech is one of the points emphasized of late years in most of the **Ministerial Freedom** articles upon the ministry. The supposed dearth of this freedom is said to be almost the chief deterrent upon



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college men. They get the idea that the ministry may not deal honestly and fearlessly with truth, following wherever it leads, uttering it without fear or favor. They note that even yet ministers here and there suffer ecclesiastical discipline for their theological holdings and pulpit teachings, or move on to escape disagreement with the center aisle. That such things have utterly ceased from the Congregational domain cannot be affirmed. We seem tolerably unanimous against iron creeds and the sport of heresy-hunting. We have no tribunals for reducing domineering pews, and holding church committees to honorable and considerate treatment of pastors. And we continue to believe it more suitable, usually, for a pastor to suffer and depart than to wage even a just and victorious warfare likely to result in a torn and bleeding church. But we, the ministry and members of the Congregational churches, have it in our power, first, to improve still further our conditions of free faith and untrammelled speech, and, second, to make it clear to all the world, and to students, that unhappy experiences of this kind are to remain as near zero among us as anywhere in the world of free thought, and that a young man and a minister would better gird up his manhood and march on unshrinking past this lion—he is chained, and most of him is stuffed.

Personal opportunity for self-realization and useful achievement is another point heavily criti-

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cized to the detriment of the ministry. In many departments of action to-day such opportunity **Ministerial** is magnificent. Limitless resources **Opportunity** in an open field challenge man's utmost aspiration and endeavor. The ministry appears to be disadvantaged in this regard. The high-hearted young man says he doubts the open field, the resources of action, the progressive character of the churches, the adequacy of church funds, the enterprise of church plans, the breadth of view, the stride forward which is so thrilling in some other lines. Now this is a most sensitive point with a normal man up to fifty years of age. The man worth while in the ministry demands first of all the chance of life. This is the prime inquiry; not for comfort, or recognition, but a great field of freedom and resource whereon to render to God the noblest account of himself. You will not answer him by pointing to a score of our leading churches with a remark about room at the top. He is not an individualist. He has accepted the age of combination. He thinks the Church should act with as wide a reach and as long a purpose as does industry or education or philanthropy or statesmanship. Such scope he would prefer to find elsewhere than to miss it in the ministry. A large fraction, I for one believe a major fraction, of our six thousand Congregational ministers are already restive with our conservative hesitation to adopt frankly the more

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efficient organization. In an age of concerted action they do not see, among some thousands of independent churches rather gingerly holding hands, a rich chance to make full account of their lives. And they are right. The opportunity of our ministry will not be commensurate with that in other departments of modern life until the Congregational churches have achieved "a national unity on a grand scale" — repeating the words of John Fiske from the former lecture. This is no ungodly lust after a bishopric; it is the righteous and timely demand to join a great body of men who march out together into the great issues where two put ten thousand to flight. We have many men who prefer to chase a thousand alone — God bless them!

VI. It is time to formulate what is coming to be, I believe, our all but unanimous conception of the ministry. And here I must, **The Congregational** in the interest of frankness, **Conception** acknowledge my disagreement with Mr. Heermance, whose chapter on the ministry seems to me unequal to the rest of his valuable volume. With many affirmations and denials in this chapter all Congregationalists are in full accord. We are as far as ever from the sacerdotal idea of the ministry as an exclusive and governing priesthood. We stand for "a *ministry*, not an order of priests." We subscribe as heartily as ever to the statement adopted by the Council of 1865, as follows:— "The ministry of the

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gospel by members of the churches who have been duly called and set apart to that work implies in itself no power of government, and ministers of the gospel not elected to office in any church are not a hierarchy, nor are they invested with any official power in or out of the churches." But this has ceased to be a sufficient statement of the position and character of our ministry. It does not lead logically into the old pastoral theory of the ministry advocated by Mr. Heermance, as earlier by Dr. Dexter. That theory was that the ministry was no larger than the pastorate, that a man entered the ministry only by assuming the pastorate of a local church and ceased from the ministry upon laying down that pastorate. Involved in this were several things, some of which have permanent validity, some not. 'The minister was chosen out of the membership of the church he was to serve; or if not, he must at once become a member of it. His ordination was mere induction into that limited pastorate, was of course an action of that one church, and was to be repeated, as affirmed in the Cambridge Platform, if he ever entered upon the pastorate of another church. Between pastorates he had no standing as a minister, though he might be looked upon as worthy and experienced.

Now this pastoral theory became almost at once in early New England too small to cover the facts. The churches held the ministry in higher esteem and administered it

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upon a larger view. Ordination became a social act, performed by representatives of the churches. The ordained man was considered a minister beyond the bounds of his own parish, and his official acts properly ministerial wherever performed. In 1812 the General Conference of Connecticut asserted that the ordained man remained amenable to discipline when out of a pastorate. Repeated ordination to the ministry gave way to installation into the pastorate, already a different matter in Congregational eyes. Dismissal from a pastorate ceased to be deposition from the ministry. The close of the last pastorate of a lifetime was not *ipso facto* departure from the ministry. The man's standing in the eyes of men, his responsibility to the Congregational order, his right to officiate temporarily in any church that invited him — in short, his full ministerial character and power, both in the Church and before the law of the land, abode upon him, and in their sacred folds was he buried, however late and full of years. He himself, indeed, might lay off his ministerial character by definite act of withdrawal. He might, if unworthy, be stripped of it, but, as Congregationalists have jealously protested, only by a similar body to that which ordained him, viz., a council convened for that specific purpose. This is not the practise of the pastoral theory of the ministry, any more than it is of the sacerdotal

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theory. Neither, it should be added, must we keep on affirming the obsolete pastoral theory in order to save our practise from slipping over into the sacerdotal theory. Nor, be it further added, is it the Presbyterian theory. In that scheme the minister is not a member of a church at all, but of a presbytery. He is thus part of a body which is above the churches and has authority in the churches. And it is by this body that he is, humanly speaking, made a minister. Between this and the Congregational practise here advocated there is a gap which we have neither reason nor willingness to bridge. It is, I believe, possible to formulate our ministerial theory and Congregationally safe to practise it in accordance with the larger facts thus presented and the wider social order of the present day.

In our polity, then, the ministry is greater than the pastorate. I like Dr. Ross' putting of it as **Kingdom Theory** a function in the Church-Kingdom. It is an order or range of service in the Kingdom and the Church. It is not outside the Church, and we rightly hold our ministers to church-membership. It is not above the Church, not a hierarchy with governing power over the churches. It is only by way of the pastorate that it becomes official in the churches. A minister must be a pastor or be invited to perform pastoral service in order to get the office and opportunity of leadership in any church. The ministry, as distinguished from

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the pastorate, is to be found not merely in the churches, but in and among them in a pervasive sense. It belongs to the churches in common, to the Church Catholic. It is a service to the Church at large, ready to define itself upon invitation into a pastorate of any local church at any time. This distinction discloses the safety enjoyed by every Congregational church with reference to the body of men called the ministry. No one of these men, nor all of them combined, can enter the field of any local church for the purpose, or by the power of any official action, save upon that church's invitation and for the term of that church's pleasure.

Being such, the ministry is in our Congregational view a lifelong function. We do not hold that ordination confers an indelible character. It rather recognizes a divine call into a sacred and permanent vocation. It seems clear to us that God has such an enduring service of religion and calls men into it. It is the number of men called of God into the lifelong service of religion and the Church that we, in common with all Christians, mean by the ministry. At this point, as distinctly as at any, we repudiate the pastoral theory with its temporary character. We mean to ordain only such men as have entered upon a long engagement with God.

Let us, then, frankly accept the implications of this conception. We ordain a man to the ministry of Jesus Christ; we install him into the pastorate

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of a particular church. We should no longer hesitate at general ordination to the ministry apart from installation into a pastorate. There is no reason in the character of Congregational ordination, though there may be special and personal reasons, against taking the graduating class of any seminary and ordaining them together in one great day to the Christian ministry, to go their several ways into pastorates or evangelism or religious education or the mission field as the Spirit may lead them. In parts of our country, perhaps not here in New England, we are frankly practising such general ordination. And so logical and practical is it, that it seems likely to win its way, aided by the modern decline of installation and the increasing brevity of formal pastorates.

We should also cease to claim for the local church the exclusive right to ordain. That belongs with the pastoral, not with the Kingdom theory of the ministry. The right of every church to invite any man to officiate as its pastor is not to be denied, nor its right to call a council to ordain a candidate. The Congregational churches may, indeed, prefer to retain this method of getting at the ordination of new men. But let us discharge our minds of the fiction that the meaning of this method is that ordination is the prerogative of a single church, a sacred part of its wonderful autonomy, while the cooperation of other churches in ordination is social courtesy



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and a good display of church fraternity. It is time to hold and practise the larger idea that the Congregational Church — Congregational Churches, if the phrase is preferred — provides itself, or themselves, with a ministry. The ordination of a candidate is the act of the Church at large, performed by the churches of a vicinage acting coordinately and representing not a single church but the denomination. Nor need we wait for the individual church to initiate the procedure and give the churches right and occasion to ordain. Ordination should be by that body, namely, the local association of churches, to which we safely entrust the standing of ministers; and the association should be ready to meet for ordination at the call of its own officers, upon the request either of a local church or of the candidate himself. And even if ordination by a council of churches is still preferred, it should be as competent and orderly for an association of churches as for a single church to call that council. The provision, be it repeated, of an unending line of men discharging the ministerial function in the Kingdom and the Church is the duty and prerogative of the Church, or of the churches corporately, not singly.

This may sound heretical to many mature and ecclesiastically jealous Congregational ears. It may therefore be necessary to **Congregational** protest once more that this is **Strategy** not a process of Presbyterianizing the Con-

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gregational ministry. It will not have escaped attention that the self-control of each local church still remains uninvaded. Though the churches act corporately in filling the ranks of the ministry, they cannot thrust a single minister into the pastorate of any church or withdraw a pastor. Our ministers remain members of local churches and so are amenable to ordinary church discipline. A church is as free as ever to advance one of its own members for temporary service in its own pulpit, as free as ever to request other churches to unite in ordaining a promising candidate. And ordination by local association, which will be brought forward in another lecture, is no less completely in the control of the churches than is ordination by council. The larger conception of the ministry does not elevate the ministry above the churches, nor give it power over the churches. And be it further protested that here is no attempt to produce a new conception of the Congregational ministry or to alter our Congregational practise. The attempt is to state clearly, albeit with cordial approval, what is believed to be the increasing belief and practise, the truer and foreordained idea. It is offered, too, as a most significant element in our denominational reconstruction. The achievement of a national unity involves such enlarged administration of the ministry. And there exists no more important point in Congregational statesmanship. The welfare of our churches and the

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fruitage of their work depend under God upon their ministerial leadership. The full ranks, personal quality and efficiency of that leadership depend upon the most commanding conception of it wrought out into the most liberal and engaging opportunity of service. Here is our supreme strategy. There is all to gain and nothing to lose in it. It makes for manhood, vision, power. The ministry wants, not to be carried, but to be challenged and enabled. There is no danger of enfeebling and pauperizing such a body of Christ-called men. Give them room and resources. Then make your scrutiny of candidates searching, your selection rigid, your demands heavy, the battle fierce all the day long, the sacrifice a whole burnt offering; these men will keep full ranks, will fight the fight, will finish the course, will keep the faith, — and with God be the rest!



LECTURE III  
FORMS OF LOCAL FELLOWSHIP



### III

## FORMS OF LOCAL FELLOWSHIP

ESSENTIAL Congregationalism resides in the local church. If we try to state our polity in a single sentence, we must affirm the native right of individual Christians to organize themselves into a church, sovereign in its private life and uniting with other sovereign churches in voluntary forms of fellowship and work. It is in the local church not as an isolated and self-sufficient integer, but as a social being and member of a body, that we find the essence of our Congregational order. Our tersest characterization must have room for our social forms. Rising thus in the local church and moving outward, our order is seen to differ radically from polities whose essence lies in an authoritative hierarchy. But careful words are necessary to differentiate it from polities whose source and direction agree with ours. It is important to get into view, over against Presbyterianism for example, just what we must stand for and all we need to stand for. I should state this essential distinction thus: Congregationalism stands and must stand for direct democracy in the local church and absence of authority in the fellowship forms. Such double statement may seem to many unnecessary. It is admitted that either half involves the other.

**Distinctive Feature  
of Congregational  
Polity**

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Direct democracy in the local church means freedom from all coercion from above. The absence of authority from the whole fellowship system guarantees independent popular action in the local church. Yet it seems well to utter both points in a working statement of our polity. For we are self-conscious and distressed at both points. We have to lay stress, now on the one, and then on the other. A platform two planks deep feels firmer.

The phrase, pure or direct democracy in the local church, may appear to miss the point. Our **Local Church a Pure Democracy** historic words have been "the autonomy of the local church." We have meant by these words real and entire self-government. That has seemed the precise point to guard, the proud distinction of our democratic churches. Many are satisfied to assure the churches this freedom from outside interference. It matters not under what forms each sovereign church may conduct its private life. Dr. Mackennal deemed it sufficient, "if it be recognized that the government of each particular church is in its membership." Without obscuring this, may we not, in these days when our uninvaded self-control is secure, put our local life in some richer phrase, such as direct democracy? An addition of meaning is not denied, is intended rather, but not a substitute principle; for the essence of democracy is free popular self-control. No attempt is made to alter Congregational prac-



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tise, but only to characterize it. As a matter of fact, bare autonomy has been our fighting line. Behind that line our church methods have agreed upon more than sheer freedom to do as each liked. If a church here and there chose to commit its annual procedure to an authoritative session, the rest of us did not count that good Congregationalism; it was, so far forth, straight Presbyterianism in local administration; it delegated authority out of the hands of the people. We, the onlookers, took refuge in the principle of autonomy, initiated no action against that church, and waited for time; but we were not satisfied. It was a case of autonomy, but it was not good Congregationalism.

It is now entirely safe to withdraw all but the sentinels from the fighting line of bare autonomy. We could throw the total force **More Than Bare** back there, armed cap-a-pie, at a **Autonomy** bugle call, but it is cold ground to hold idly night and day. In inside practise we stand for that which is signified by the phrase "direct democracy." The Congregational churches are those which do, as they like, indeed, with none to say them nay, but which like to handle local affairs by direct popular action. We are used to membership franchise and universal participation in church administration. We call our important business meetings according to legal forms; other meetings we convene informally, perhaps at the close of midweek prayer meetings. In all cases we,

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the people, do business at first-hand on the basis of equal rights and duties. This is not other than autonomy; it is more than autonomy. It is the Congregational practise of autonomy. This addition to bare autonomy deserves to be inserted in our statement of Congregational principles and our characterization of Congregational practise. It is too central to be omitted. It ought also to be contended for, and restored wherever impaired. There are one or two lapses from it which may be mentioned here.

In the first place our direct democracy too often suffers at the hands of pastors or standing com-  
**Autocratic** mittees. It is easy for some pastors to  
**Officials** make themselves almost the whole thing, the sole administrators—in blunt term, autocrats. Many cases of such autocracy are but mildly guilty, the church not only making no outcry, but welcoming the relief. There are, however, heinous cases of tyranny on the part of strong men who are determined to have their way. All pastors should remember that the people rule in our polity, and the people should suffer no pastor to forget. The Congregational pastor is neither ruler nor hired servant. He should neither lord it over the flock, nor do their work for them at market-place wages for a definite time. He is the elected leader, whose duty is to lead and train. He will do well to have conspicuous among his working principles this one, that he will do nothing which he can get any one

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else to do. It is his business to secure the widest distribution and most effective discharge of Christian service and church administration. The church well-trained and led feels no sense of helplessness when it sorrowfully surrenders its pastor to another field.

Scarcely less uncongregational and undemocratic is the assumed domination of a church committee. A recent case of it has been reported to be as flagrant as this, that the decision of a board of trustees was enforced against the majority action of the church. Responsibility for such an offense must be divided between the board that arrogated the authority and the church that suffered it to do so. No Congregational church should allow any issue to be carried beyond its own immediate reach or counter to its own decision. Nor should any pastor or church officer ever try to thwart the popular will or to proceed without it.

The other impairment of our direct democracy is the ecclesiastical society. How this arose out of the early union of Church and Ecclesiastical Society State, and how it has persisted in New England, though hardly known from the Hudson River to the Pacific, need not be related. This parish system withdrew secular affairs from the management of the church into the control of a small body of men who might or might not be members of the church. Too often, in the Unitarian controversy which smote New Eng-

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land, they were not members. The church had no standing before the law; legally the society was the church. The great majority of church-members were thus debarred from exercising in a main section of church affairs their native right to handle their own business. A curious paradox appeared here. The original contention that citizens of a town should not be taxed for the minister's salary without being represented in the business of the church led to the debarment of the great majority of contributing church-members — all the women and many of the men — in order to admit into business management the few men who were contributors without being church-members.

Relief has come through laws in all the states providing for the direct incorporation and legal standing of the church, with the consequent control of all its business. Under this provision the transfer from the society to the incorporated church has proceeded slowly. I am interested now, not in presenting the actual situation, but in urging that this parish system is a serious impairment of that direct democracy which is our very life and to which we insist upon conforming our Congregational order. A church is competent indeed to commit its affairs to a small body of inside and outside males called the society, or to continue to leave its affairs in their historic hands. It is the way in which our New England churches have actually been compelled

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to live. But it is not proper Congregationalism; it is a weakness in the very citadel of power, the local church. It is to the honor of our Congregational character that damage so slight and infrequent has resulted from a dual system of which it has been forcibly said, "No other churches anywhere, under any polity, were ever more completely in subjection to a power largely outside and independent of themselves. . . . The result of union with the State was that the Church was bereft of liberty and independent life."<sup>1</sup>

Turn now to the other half of our statement of essential Congregationalism, namely, the absence of authority from our fellowship forms, or the substitution of public opinion for authority in those forms. This may seem to be the main point in our polity and the best way to put it. We have been very assertive of local independence. Such assertion of right often sounds combative; it certainly has often been divisive among brethren. Is it not preferable to use a phrase which faces the other way? Absence of authority from our fellowship forms is a joint phrase. We utter it together in that corporate capacity against which our churches have hurled their bolts of autonomy. It affirmatively disavows that dread monster, authority. It frankly adopts public opinion as its working

<sup>1</sup> Ross, Church Kingdom, pp. 331, 332.

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force. It leaves the local church secure in freedom and democracy. This is all that our churches demand. This being assured, based upon our mutual trust, we are ready to develop our voluntary fellowship forms unto full efficiency. We never have been unwilling to frame the larger union and perform the wider service; we have only waited to be sure of our way. Agreeing that our larger life is to be void of coercion, we hesitate no longer, as is shown by the universal interest now given to administrative reorganization.

Note, then, our present problem in terms of our two main principles, independence and fellowship. The former is as priceless as ever, but it is finally and forever secure. Its sphere and scope have shrunk in our modern social conditions, though the interests which lie therein never can lose their primacy. The inmost parts of the spiritual service which produces individual salvation and parish ministrations continue to be discharged by the churches one by one. Our combined work rests heavily upon that which the churches must continue to do mainly alone.

The limits, however, of the strictly local field are suprisingly narrow. Cooperation has now a large place, even in the spiritual work just referred to. Revival work is now largely done in cooperation. No large city should remain unprovided with a federated parish system resem-

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bling that of the New York City Federation. And when you think of it, how little can a local church properly do in entire disregard of the common good! All private affairs are matters of common concern. The election of a pastor or a deacon, the budget for the new year, plans of local work — all such things affect the sisterhood of churches. And that church is contributing most to the Kingdom which in all these things called local and private is sensitive to the wider interests and needs.

Beyond the circumscribed local activities, which are properly left to each church alone, stretches away the common field **Cooperation Beyond Local Field** which must be worked in union. Just here occurs the mistake. Too often our independence has meant the right to work our separate wills out in the larger domain. It was natural enough, for our church work was obliged to begin and continue long without ways for laboring together. But that time is now past. We agree that the local organization and most of the parish ministrations are best handled by the single church. Let each church continue to elect its own officers, care for its own property, and sustain the various forms of worship and helpfulness. But out in the larger region, in the affairs which cover a city, a county, a state, a great section, or the whole country — out there, what right has a church to do its separate will? It was Dr. Quint, one of our ablest ecclesi-

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asticians, who said, "It is manifest that no church can rightly assume to do, without consultation, what may affect the character and work of the churches in general."<sup>1</sup> There still are pastors and churches declining to cooperate in plans that would adequately cover a city, persistently turning their sole and singular work out into the city wherever they choose with small regard to fellow laborers. In one of our strategic centers the pastor of a leading church has consistently declined parish cooperation. He said recently to a brother pastor, "I propose to attend strictly to my own church, and I advise you to do the same." Such independence, persisting in separate action, is now outdated. The social age is in full swing. Without losing individual initiative we must unite. Without neglecting the strictly local work we must organize our churches for effective labor in the wider field. Out there independence must yield to fellowship. Ministers must learn to be colleagues and colaborers. Churches must learn the same lesson. Our present concern is not the safeguarding of independence, but the development of fellowship.

The problem of the hour may be stated thus: Given independence, how much fellowship can we develop? There have been times when duty faced the other way: Given a fair measure of fellowship, how can we securely establish independence? Until freedom

<sup>1</sup> Dunning, *Congregationalists in America*, p. 494.



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is won, all sacrifice must serve it, all other good must wait. Fellowship is the greater good, but only if it be of freemen. The field has swept onward. Sacrifice now belongs to fellowship. Independence must not be impaired; it never will be. We are free and independent churches. How much can we rejoice in one another? How much can we do in union? How shall we freely organize in order to manifold our service to the Kingdom? All would work out grandly if Congregationalists would unanimously adopt this social purpose, would take local independence for granted, would quietly sustain their local life, and would turn their main administrative attention to fellowship. We should find the wisest forms and methods, and our missionary work would leap forward. Any one familiar with our state meetings or our National Council can predict the relief and the release of energy, if all should sit together taking freedom for granted, too sure of it to assert it, trusting one another without suspicion, absorbed in love and strategy. "It is time," writes another, "to answer the question, Upon what terms is it possible for Congregationalism to become a manifested power? But that can never be till we have learned that independency is not an ultimate object, but only the means to a higher end."<sup>1</sup>

Proceeding from the local church into our fellowship forms, the ministerial association may

<sup>1</sup> Macfadyen, *Constructive Congregational Ideals*, p. 59.

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claim a passing notice. It might be called, as it has been, a voluntary social club, without administrative significance, save for the important fact that it has held in its hand, to the present hour in some sections, prime interests of the churches, namely, the licensure of candidates and the standing of ministers. As long as this is so, every member is responsible to the association for his ministerial character and the association must answer to the churches for all its members. A body with such responsibilities cannot be called a social club, and must not decline to hold its members to moral and professional standards. But, being a purely ministerial body, it never can properly represent democratic churches. Beyond New England it has small place in the denomination. In many localities it has never existed; elsewhere it has disbanded or been merged with Monday ministers' meetings. "Ministerial associations," wrote Dr. Ross, "are temporary in our polity. They were the stepping-stones in this country between the independency which relied on the State and associations of independent churches. They secure the fellowship of the clergy, not of the churches, except through their pastors."<sup>1</sup>

The association or conference of churches, on the other hand, is taking its place at the head of our line of fellowship. It is truly and closely representative of the churches. It is the churches

<sup>1</sup> Ross, *Church Kingdom*, p. 294.

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of a convenient vincinage organized together and meeting by elected delegates for mutual help and united labor. The members of the association are the churches; the individual delegates are simply members of the meeting. Here commences our indirect or representative democracy. Not until the nineteenth century came the hour of association of churches. They would have arisen in the seventeenth century save for opposition by the ministry. In 1641 Massachusetts Colony adopted a code of laws permitting both ministerial and church associations. In 1662 its legislature ordered a synod to settle, among other questions, this: "Whether, according to the Word of God, there ought to be a consociation of churches, and what should be the manner of it." "This question," say the Colonial Records, "was unfortunately returned to the Secretary of State by the elders." "The elders stifled this attempt of the laymen for church association," is a later comment.

The association of churches at once approved itself and spread rapidly. It now covers all our churches. And so true is it to Congregationalism, that its function has been steadily enlarged, till it has come to be our pivotal fellowship body. As concerns service in the Kingdom of God, the association's field remains small; our extensive ministries must go through state and national agencies. But as concerns orderly and re-

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sponsible organization, for both safety and significance, the local association is for the present the most important of our fellowship bodies. I would therefore bespeak for it the unflinching interest of churches and ministers. Because the association is the churches in immediate organization, able to report and appeal instantly back to the churches, liable to be called to prompt account by the churches, prepared to carry out the will of the churches into wider fields of fellowship, it is both safe and important to magnify this body.

In its enlarging scope and function the association is charged first with the welfare of its **Welfare of** own churches. Our churches have **Its Churches** been deserted by one another. Our independence has been shamefully unfraternal. Under our competitive system hundreds of our churches can barely make a living; some that ought not to fail starve to death. Some, badly located or abandoned by the currents of social life, ought to remove or disband. Some that are doing noble work might be helped to multiply the service and increase the joy. Our churches are slow to learn what it means to be members one of another.

Included in the association's duty is the religious condition of the county or district, so far as this belongs to Congregationalists. The question is, What is our part in the religious welfare of this district, and how shall our

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churches, organized in the association, perform their part? Enter here the duties of church extension and evangelization. **Church Extension and Evangelization**

Why should a new church be formed when and where a few individuals would like to have it? Every Congregational church in the district is affected by each new church organized. The latter will draw members from one and another church, and probably will appeal to the churches singly and to the home missionary society for financial aid. It is time all over the land for church extension to proceed upon advice and cooperation, and for the power of Christ to be carried throughout a city or a county by the united churches. Bay Association of churches in California covers a large county, including the cities of Berkeley, Oakland, and Alameda. New Haven West Association in Connecticut covers the city and county of New Haven. These bodies are competent to spread the united power of all the Congregational churches over the spiritual needs of those counties. I do not, of course, forget specially organized church extension societies and city mission societies, which have the advantage of restricted aim and special pleading. But I believe that the associations of churches can well handle such work until the local fields grow so dense as to require separate organizations.

For this work of church welfare and extension an advisory, prudential or missionary com-

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mittee of the association is sufficient. One such association acts through a prudential committee, **Prudential or** whose function is described as follows in the constitution: "It shall be **Advisory** the duty of the Prudential Committee **Committees** to promote the welfare and fellowship of the churches of this association in all possible ways, and especially as follows: (a) To consider the opportunities, responsibilities and resources of the churches of this association, and to study the whole field with reference to the best distribution and employment of forces; (b) To receive any requests for counsel, to offer advice in needy and difficult cases, and when necessary to report to the association ways and means for meeting such cases and execute the association's provisions for relief; (c) To initiate and report plans for new enterprises and forward movements, in short, all that pertains to the extension of Christ's kingdom throughout the county. And to make its work effective the Prudential Committee is hereby empowered by the churches through the association to assume from year to year whatever financial responsibility may be necessary." This particular committee has led the association to serve the churches in several important advances, such as the union of two churches, the erection of a new meeting-house, the purchase of a parsonage, the organization and housing of a new church, the removal of a church to a better site — these along with

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lesser acts of helpfulness and a constant brooding watch-care over the churches and their united fields. The committee answers every call upon its service and is expected to proffer advice and initiate work at its discretion. It would be hard for men who appreciate the labor of such a committee to think any association in the country well off without one, or in lack of some adequate provision for such service.

Another charge upon the local association is the orderly standing of churches and ministers. Dr. Quint wrote: "No Congregational church is independent. It can become so by withdrawing from its affiliations with the other churches, but in that case it ceases to be a part of the Congregational body."<sup>1</sup> The Council Manual, issued by the National Council as its expression of Congregational organization, explicitly includes membership in a local association as requisite for a church which would secure and maintain Congregational character and standing. Every Congregational church is thus amenable to the denomination, and every association is responsible for the good standing of its churches. The same is true of every Congregational minister. His good name and commendation to the churches used to be in the hands of ordaining, installing and dismissing councils. In the decline of installation, ministerial standing has passed over to

**Standing of  
Churches and  
Ministers**

<sup>1</sup> Dunning, *Congregationalists in America*, p. 492.

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the associations of churches. We have reached such proportions that we can secure good order in no less methodical way. The National Council has affirmed the conditions of ministerial standing to be threefold:

- (1) Membership in a Congregational church;
- (2) Ordination to the Christian ministry;
- (3) Membership in that body, in most states the local association of churches, which holds the standing of ministers.

Now for the safe and orderly procedure of our denominational life throughout this great country this matter of the good standing of churches and ministers is extremely important and gives prominence to the fellowship body charged with it. I believe that we are wise in laying it upon a local body, composed of the churches and ministers themselves, closely conversant with all personal character and church conditions, meeting regularly and as a matter of course, easily meeting in special session either to correct irregularities or to perform specific tasks. The state conference is less suited to be the custodian of ministerial and church standing. Nor is there any local body adequate to bear this obligation save the association of churches. The council is fugitive, while these responsibilities are permanent. The ministerial association is limited to the clergy, while these responsibilities pertain to the churches inclusive of the clergy. The National



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Council recommended that all local associations of churches so amend their constitutions as to provide for ministerial standing, and that all ministerial associations turn their members over to the church bodies. The transfer is already well-nigh universal.

There is one new feature in the possible scope and function of the association of churches which I desire to join with Mr. Heermance **Ordination by** and others in advocating. It is the **Association** ordination of ministers. It seems to some like red revolution to carry over ordination from the time-honored council to the upstart association. But there are reason and good order in it. In our Congregational history ordination by other bodies than the council is far from unknown, while at present there is a distinct trend toward the association of churches. Several State bodies have recommended it in whole or in part. And those who have considered it and seen it work cannot help believing that it will gradually win its way. It cannot be forced. Those who prefer ordination by council are as free as ever to employ that method. The change must come as a recognized improvement.

It is evident at a glance that ordination by an association of churches is good Congregational ordination. No man ordained by **The Best** such a body would have his minis- **Ordaining Body** terial standing questioned anywhere in the land. The association is a better body than the council

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for this service, inasmuch as it includes all the churches of the vicinage and has permanent life and records. Having more time and repeated sessions for its business, with standing officers and committees, it is less likely than a council to perform a mistaken ordination, while it is always at hand to correct such an error.

“Over some case of ministerial delinquency or impotence we ask, Who ordained this man? A council in northeastern Maine or southwestern California. Write that council and charge back its blunder upon it; bid it recall those ordination papers and terminate the mischievous or ineffective career. Impossible; the deed was done by an agency irresponsible, because too short-lived to be brought to an account, created for the work of an hour with endless consequences, and falling apart beyond recall before sunset. It gave the ordained man the sole copy of credentials good for a lifetime to the ends of the Congregational earth and beyond. It sent no records to a responsible custodian. And yet there is a thoroughly Congregational and representative body, dignified, stable, inclusive of all the neighboring churches and ministers and responsible for all, possessing all the prerogatives and machinery for ordination. It writes such deeds in permanent records. It is more cautious, because it studies constantly the interests intrusted to it, and because it must answer any day for the deeds it has done. It can be called together as readily

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as a council. Holding stated meetings, it need not for every case be called in extra session."

The main objection to ordination by association of churches, aside from sentimental devotion to the council, is a fear of some encroachment upon the liberties of the churches. Let us continue to ordain, say the fearful, by the council which disbands at once; let us not trust this principal matter in the hands of a permanent body able to act repeatedly; independence is endangered by a permanent body. That general proposition is, I trust, being sufficiently argued in these lectures. To make a stand on ordination seems to me peculiarly inapt. There can be no threat upon liberty at this point; it is too brief and fleeting. Time is a necessary element in tyranny. Ordination is done and past in a day, else a council never could perform it. It passes over into permanent ministerial standing; in that there is time for tyranny.

Suffer another moment's emphasis upon our present management of the life of our ministry. Licensure, or approbation to preach, *The Life of Our Ministry* is in the hands of the association of churches or ministers. Ministerial standing, as a permanent holding, is in the same hands. Certification of that standing is therefore given at any time by the association, and the council is no longer depended on for a minister's credentials. Virtual deposition from the ministry for sufficient cause is in the same associational

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hands; for while technical deposition is held by a council, the refusal of an association to sustain longer a minister's membership and standing locks him, and ought to lock him, out of our pulpits. It has always been next to impossible to secure formal deposition by a council; it is now rendered unnecessary by the normal working of ministerial standing in the association of churches. Thus that body presides over the whole extent of a minister's professional life, his ordination alone excepted. At that juncture we turn to the council, as though to say that we will not entrust with this man's ordination the body to which we commit his entire career, though that body be composed of the very churches which must in any case perform his ordination. Safety, consistency, fitness and all the values of good order should, and I believe will, transfer ordination to the association's hands. And this is another argument for locating the whole process of ministerial standing in associations of churches instead of associations of ministers.

It remains to suggest that many other things hitherto performed by the council would often be done more appropriately and effectively by the association of churches. The installation or dismissal of a pastor, the organization or migration of a church, the union of two churches, many appeals for advice and material assistance, counsel upon cases of discipline or business difficulty

**Other Functions  
for the  
Association**

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— such things belong more fitly to the association with its system of meetings and records, officers and committees. For, be it said for the smaller churches and their pastors who shrink from pressing their desires and rights, it is a main weakness of our council system that it assembles the “leading churches” and “leading pastors,” seldom including those who would most appreciate participation in ecclesiastical affairs. These fellowship functions are occasions of growth and brotherly love, as well as service. It is neither fraternity nor strategy to magnify an agency which in the human nature of the case leaves many churches and pastors out in the cold year after year. Moreover, most of these denominational occasions concern the whole circle of the vicinage, small and large churches alike. It is both good Christianity and good democracy to substitute the association of churches for the council in these denominational activities. The transfer would be one more step in simplifying and strengthening our polity.

What, then, of the council, our true and tried servant, our familiar friend, our Congregational way, the habit of three hundred Permanent Scope of the Council years — what of this? No dishonor will be shown it in the change. So useful an agency is it that we should be entirely unwilling to deprive ourselves of it. It is admitted that some occasions for fellowship can be better served by a council than by an association. Rep-

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representatives from a larger neighborhood, even from beyond state boundaries, are sometimes needed, as in an extreme case of discipline or financial distress. I have known a council to be preferred for the good reason that the larger body could not be entertained in the small meeting-house. And a case frequently arises of such length, delicacy or complexity as to require a small and select council.

Beyond these ordinary uses, however, the council has in our practise of the Congregational polity a special function which assures it **Court of Last Resort** abiding honor. For this function I like the brief, trim phrase, "court of last resort." To this title Mr. Heermance and others object, without suggesting another equally terse and adequate. Having dismissed authority from our total system, and having committed our decision to rational constraint by public opinion, it would seem as if no phrases could threaten our serenity. But in whatever terms stated, the provision is a real Congregational distinction and protection. We must always have some recourse from mistakes and injustice. If a church, for example, or a minister has just complaint against the decision of the association of which either is a member, an appeal must be within reach to a judicatory regarded superior, because more disinterested, because concentrated upon the one issue, and because advantaged by information of the former trial. Refuge has not always been found in a

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council. In early days resort was had to town officers or the state legislature. In the consociational days in Connecticut an appeal from one consociation might be presented to a neighboring one in joint session; if the two decisions coincided, they constituted a doubly final and authoritative settlement of the case. Both these lines of appeal have disappeared. We look to the State no longer, save in legal complications. Nor do we appeal from one association or conference to another, expecting the two to play a drawn game or enforce a joint decree. Least of all do we think of carrying our appeals up to state or national bodies. To these we give no legislative or judicial functions, and to them present no such business. We thus have no ascending judicial system, such as would remove our difficult cases from the vincinage to distant judgment-seats. On the contrary, we carry our appeals directly back to the local churches. Our resort is to a council, that familiar immediate representative of the churches, whose nature is to utter the best available judgment of the churches and leave it to be enforced by its inherent reason and public opinion. If we need a safeguard against other polities, here is one. The Presbyterian may carry his troubles up the line, to presbytery, synod and assembly, and accept the results formulated in the distant judicatories. The Congregationalist turns back to the local churches whose fraternal advice is his final dependence. As long

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as this method of appeal stands, a drift into other polities is blocked. Equally blocked is a tendency into any sort of perilous centralization. We may freely develop the local association, only keeping the council behind it as court of appeal. This turn is pivotal in our polity; upon it we swing back to the *pro re nata* action of the churches. And should the council come to be mainly limited to this function of appeal, it would therein retain eminence and power such as should satisfy its most jealous advocates.

Returning now to the association of churches, let me for a moment urge the importance of **Uniform Terminology** agreeing upon a uniform terminology. The National Council has recommended that our local organizations of churches take the name "association," and our state bodies be called "conferences." This is a subordinate but not trivial matter. An inconsistent terminology causes confusion in any department of thought or action. Science corrects it at every discoverable point. So does practical wisdom, bent upon improving methods and producing results. These are days of the constant migration of pastors and church-members. Their familiarity with our working terms and methods affects efficiency. These facts, plus the increasing administrative significance of our ecclesiastical bodies, argue the importance of uniform features and phraseology. In its main lines our work is one and the same throughout the land.



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Local variety is required only in minor details. Preference for our inherited names is natural enough, but unworthy to stand against our desire for united power.

In such ways as have now been indicated our local fellowship is being shaped. The trend all over the country is to magnify the local association, composed of the churches themselves in immediate union for the common work of the vicinage. Here, close to the separate churches, in their first organized body, we find the safest basis of good order. Here we fear no danger to our liberties, for these are the very churches whose liberties are precious. Here we have an agency adequate to meet the conditions of the local field, competent also to enter those wider relations which remain to be considered.



LECTURE IV  
STATE UNIFICATION



## IV

### STATE UNIFICATION

THE state is as natural a district for religious as for civil organization. Interests and activities of the churches too large for our local associations, yet too restricted for national administration, we handle statewide. Thus we have a state organization in every state and two in California. They have been styled conferences or associations or conventions. To secure a uniform terminology the name "conference," recommended by the National Council, is being gradually adopted.

The membership of both local associations and state conferences, which may be discussed as one question, presents difficulties **Local and State** requiring thought and experiment. **Membership**

The present variety is confusing. In some cases, local or state, the membership is limited to churches, these being represented in the meetings by pastors as such and elected delegates. In other cases ministers, whether pastors or not, have personal membership, with or without voting rights; this membership, as held and interpreted in local associations, constituting their ministerial standing. There are state bodies which determine their own membership independently, as of course they are free to do, while others base their membership upon the local associations. Now similar to that regarding termin-

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ology, though much more cogent here, is the argument for uniformity. Not until we have achieved it, can a minister or active layman, removing from one state to another, enter upon his new relations unconfused.

The first question concerns the duties and prerogatives connected with ministerial standing.

**Ministerial** Shall the minister's connection with  
**Membership and** a local association of churches,  
**Standing** which he is obliged to secure and keep unsullied, be reckoned as membership? If so, what kind of membership, entitled to what privileges, and charged with what duties? If not membership, what is it? Can so vital and responsible a connection, involving discipline for cause, be ordered and insisted upon without being accorded the status of membership? Ministerial standing is coordinate with the standing of a church; if the latter involves full membership in an association, with voting rights in all meetings, should the former be limited to less? In this matter is it right to reckon a minister as no more than an individual church-member? The local association is the body in and through which denominational administration is carried on; shall a minister have no participation in administration save as a church-member occasionally elected as delegate to an association meeting? If a larger share is just or desirable, is it sufficient to give him an associate or honorary membership, with all rights save that of voting?

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Three practises now in vogue among us may be stated as follows: — (a) in some associations all ministers hold personal voting membership; (b) in other associations there is no ministerial membership, but pastors are *ex officio* delegates and voting members of the meetings; other ministers have no place in any meeting save as duly elected delegates of churches; (c) in still other associations even pastors hold no *ex officio* place in the meetings, but must be elected as delegates.

It is easy to object to any one of these arrangements, but the most just and consistent solution does not instantly appear. Ministerial membership, giving each minister, whether pastor or not, voting rights in every meeting, puts a minister on a par with a church, gives him undue prominence in the meetings and the organization generally, and introduces a double and disparate membership. On the other hand, to refuse ministerial membership is liable to injustice. For the minister, not the pastor only, is held under responsibilities peculiar to him, not shared by any layman, shared only by a church. We Congregationalists — and freemen generally — have a very vital rubric entitled “taxation without representation.” We feel like insisting in simple justice that one who is held to unique accountability must be given unique rights in the organization which holds him.

There are times when ordinary injustice at this point would be magnified into grievous

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wrong. The discipline of a minister as church-member belongs in the church which holds his **Complicated by** membership. But his discipline as **Discipline** minister belongs in the association which holds his standing. It is a grave question whether he ought to be held amenable to disciplinary action by a body in which voting membership is denied him, and in which his fellow ministers, likewise excluded from membership, have no right to give judgment in his trial. Discipline for delinquency reveals the disparity between minister and lay delegate; the latter the association cannot call to account, his case lying totally within his own church. If you surrender the associational discipline of ministers, you do indeed remove that difference between them and lay delegates, but you also throw out the real values of ministerial standing. Unless the rolls are kept purged of delinquents, it is worth nothing to stand in the lists. It is a good thing to withdraw the special privileges formerly accorded to the clergy and hold them to the common standards of manhood and social order. But when the question concerns their professional responsibilities, you will find neither ministers nor laymen willing to reduce the craft to the lay level or refuse it the standing commensurate with its obligations. Between such depreciation and the segregation of ministers as a class or order in their own exclusive associations, where the church cannot pass upon their pro-



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fessional standing, there is safe middle ground. The double membership of churches and ministers disturbs very little the thought of the churches, and introduces no disorder into current affairs. If, however, complete ministerial membership should upon discussion be refused, then the *ex officio* standing of pastors in the association meetings has not a little in its favor. I believe that, thinking this matter out through some years of experiment, churches and ministers will agree upon the justice and desirability of safeguarding the rights and obligations pertaining to ministerial membership. If it come to be regarded as a special privilege, it will go and ought to go. If it turn out to be justice and a true way of sustaining the high character and securing the full service of our ministry, it will be retained.

A further inquiry concerns the membership of the state conference, and particularly its relation to that of the local associations within the state. At present conferences differ. Some admit every pastor as one of the representatives of his church, but no ministers on any other terms. Michigan, Wisconsin, Nebraska, California and others admit as members coordinate with the churches all ministers who are members of local associations within the state. This introduces the dual membership again, the voters in all meetings being ministers as such and delegates of

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Membership**

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churches. What these states seem to mean is this: Admitting the right of the state conference to determine its own membership, it is thought wiser to base it directly and completely upon membership in local associations. Upon this is founded majority membership in the National Council. It is consistent and practical for the state body also to rest its membership upon the local bodies. The states just named are saying that their state conference membership shall consist of all the churches and all the ministers named in the lists of their local associations. The purpose evidently is to assemble the total recognized forces of the state, to apply the total available power at this pivotal point between local and national forms of work.

Conceivably it may still be asked why the state conference should, in constituting its membership, refer at all to the local associations. The answer is, Because our Congregational practise leaves in the associations the determination of the good standing which consists in membership acquired and retained. The state conference, the national societies and the National Council then accept the matter of membership as settled and adjust their practise thereto. The question then becomes one as to representation in these higher bodies. And the two classes to be represented are:— (1) churches and (2) ministers, the whole number of the latter as an ordained ministry, not merely the

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major fraction of them as pastors. Our organic direction, as considered in the first lecture, is from below upward. The single church is first. The churches organize the local association, and make it the corner-stone of our fellowship structure. The churches carry up to the state conference nothing which the smaller bodies can bear just as well. And the churches carry on to the national bodies only the still wider interests common to the states. It is admitted, of course, that these adjustments are still *sub judice*; all methods always are in Congregationalism. But these are present phases and attempted interpretations. The wisest structural details will seasonably answer our united inquiries. And the denser states, whose state meetings tend toward an unmanageably large membership, may make special contributions toward the solutions.

Beyond membership come the two main matters of all — state unification and state superintendence. Consider first the unifying of our total Congregational organization with its agencies and labors in each state. The National Council at its Cleveland meeting recommended as follows:— “That the state organizations become legally incorporated bodies; and that under a general superintendent and such boards as they may create, and acting in cooperation with committees of local associations and churches, they provide for and direct the extension of church work, the planting of

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churches, the mutual oversight and care of all self-sustaining as well as missionary churches, and other missionary and church activities, to the end that closer union may ensure greater efficiency without curtailing local independence." Action of this sort had been begun in several states prior to the Cleveland meeting, and since then has been accelerated and extended. Michigan was the first state to formulate definite progress toward a unity of state work, with Wisconsin and Northern California moving that way. Ohio then outstripped Michigan, to be herself outdone by Northern and then by Southern California. And now Wisconsin and Michigan are showing us all the way unto complete unity of state interests under a single administrative head. Other states in their annual meetings and by committees or groups of individuals are advancing in this direction.

Certain thoughts appear to be brewing in many minds, somewhat as follows: — (1) It is desirable and really obligatory to unify our Congregational forces and forms for superior efficiency. (2) A state consciousness has been born, and is growing lustily. (3) Within its own borders state administration is more effective than national. The former has the advantages of intimate knowledge, close range, personal contact and strong pressure on localities, churches, individuals. (4) The right of a state to self-

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administration is superior to the right of any national body to act within a state's boundaries. Mr. John Fiske says again, "Stated broadly, so as to acquire somewhat the force of a universal proposition, the principle of federalism is just this: that the people of a state shall have full and entire control of their own domestic affairs, which directly concern them only, and which they will naturally manage with more intelligence and with more zeal than any distant governing body could possibly exercise."<sup>1</sup> Thus to efficiency and expediency we add state rights. Each fellowship body takes precedence of the higher ones. The rights of the state conference are prior to those of the national bodies. Nothing is left to the latter save what the churches see will be most effective when handled nationally. Thus our Congregational administration is "broad-based upon the people's will." Our national organizations have not always acted so; they could not until yesterday, but only to-day are they fairly beginning the new ways. We are all freshly realizing the supremacy of the churches, the representative principle, and the movement from below upward. There is no danger of stripping our national work of its magnificent proportions. Duty to our splendid societies must be kept aflame. The limits of state administration are quickly reached. Just now, in the warmth of state reorganization, there is special need of steadiness.

<sup>1</sup>American Political Ideas, pp. 133, 134.

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and vision. It is easy for mortals, acting in whatever capacity, to grow so intent as to lose sight of the greater horizons. But wherever the sky-line may be, here at hand are the state boundaries, enclosing concrete and instant obligations.

Full details cannot be given of the reorganization which has taken place in the several states already mentioned. Reports can be obtained from the state registrars. At this time it will be more profitable to present some of the major elements in the process.

First, the incorporation of the state conference. That it is possible to incorporate a body of such extended bulk is proved by the fact that the General Conference of Michigan has lived an incorporated life since 1886, and others from more recent dates. Others still, like Ohio and California, have secured incorporation within the last two years. State missionary societies have been corporations for a much longer period. Reasons for this step seem cogent. Under such an interpretation of Congregationalism as we are here submitting, no damage to our liberties need be feared. The state conference is simply the churches themselves, lacking all alien elements. Its responsibilities are changing and developing. Financial and legal obligations will be heavy in thoroughgoing state unification. The conference, once incorporated, is quite equal to all responsibilities and opportunities.

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The state conference being thus prepared for whatever may befall, the proposal is no less than to unify in its hands and conduct under its superintendence all the Congregational work in the state. It may be well to repeat that the private spheres of the separate churches and local associations are not to be invaded, that only the common work laid out in state proportions is in view, and that throughout the new method the force continues to be the influence of public opinion and not the arm of coercion. Under such safeguards the states are proceeding to do the thing which seems good theory to us all, to simplify complexity, to transform competition into combination, to reduce operating expenses, to direct the whole system from one office. It is easier to state this and to cheer for it than to achieve it; but it can be achieved everywhere. The conviction is already wide-spread that the results will be cheaply bought at whatever price of labor and patience.

In some states the relations between state conference and state missionary society present difficulties. The latter body has acquired a strong and independent life. Our action through it has grown habitual. In some cases, Connecticut and California for example, its relations with the conference have been vital. The conference elects the directors of the Missionary

**State Work**  
**Unified in Conference**

**Conference**  
**versus**  
**Missionary Society**

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Society of Connecticut. The General Association of Northern California used to elect the members of its home missionary society, while at present the twenty-one directors of the Northern California Congregational Conference are *ipso facto* the total membership of the home missionary society, and elect its directors from their own number. Elsewhere the conditions are less favorable, the missionary society being quite separate from the conference. The question being asked in state after state is this, Why should not the conference do its state missionary work directly? The conference is the churches organized, as the Connecticut constitution admirably puts it, "for the purpose of fraternal intercourse and cooperation and mutual incitement in all the evangelizing work of Christian churches." Why then must it employ a separate incorporated body and turn the churches' contributions into a separate treasury? Moreover, the churches are interested in developing a state superintendency much wider than that hitherto confined mainly to home missionary work. Must there be two superintendents? There need be but one in case the state conference manages directly its home missionary interests.

The issue here is not yet so clear as to induce uniform action. The Ohio conference has organized its state work into two bureaus; of one of these the home missionary society is a main part. In Michigan the

**Various  
Methods**



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general association, the home missionary society, the foreign missionary society, and the central advisory board have all been united into one corporation, the Michigan Congregational Conference. For legal reasons the home missionary society retains a nominal existence, but within a few years may entirely disappear. In Northern California financial obligations compel for the present the retention of the home missionary society as a separate corporation. In Southern California the early disappearance of that society into the state conference has been provided for. The Nebraska state body has under consideration a plan which merges the home missionary society in the conference. Wisconsin has reduced its state affairs, including its home missionary society, to a splendid unity.

Possible legal and financial complications may present in any state grave difficulties. Trusts must be faithfully administered. **Legal**  
Funds must not be lost by unwise **Complications**  
attempts to transfer them. Future gifts and legacies must not be jeopardized. The strong sentiments of living givers must not be shocked. Such considerations urge deliberation until good counsel settles upon the changes most certain to conserve all interests. But on the other hand the financial and legal forms become subject to modification in so far as it appears that moral integrity inheres in their general management for specified ends rather than in details of method.

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Administrative forms are but means of conveying spiritual power. It is the end that is precious to the givers of money. And it may transpire in these state negotiations that a minority, scarcely numerical at all, but forceful and persistent, can roll into the path obstacles which would not appear at all to a unanimous company. Legal difficulties are adjustable to unanimous desires held faithfully to an unaltered purpose. In the tri-church negotiations the committee on vested interests affirmed that no insurmountable obstacles were presented by property considerations. The law can bring to pass such changes as right-hearted persons have ceased to contend against.

The relations of the state conference with our national missionary societies comprise one of the **Conference and National Societies** most delicate matters to be adjusted. In certain of the reorganizing states this has proved to be a point of some friction. Our national societies have been accustomed to solicit funds freely and without concert anywhere in the land. They have gone in and out among our churches without let or hindrance. They have dealt directly and separately with the churches, each society seeking the largest possible income without regard to any other society. The confusion and discomfort of this system, the increasing irritation and inadequacy, the rising demand for cooperation between the societies, the need of orderly and reliable

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giving, — these have brought on our present trial of proportionate benevolence. This advance has been synchronous with the growing state consciousness and consolidation. And now the states are undertaking to apply, each in its own territory, the offered plan of benevolence, and on the other hand are serving friendly notice upon the national societies that their solicitations must no longer be independent of state advice and joint management. Our churches are unwilling to have a scheme, elaborated however carefully in New York or Boston, laid down hard all over the land from the national offices. There is something which looks like assessing the churches, or at least assessing the conferences and associations; and assessment is another of those dreadful words which, when uttered megaphonically from national headquarters, make autonomous Congregationalists nervous. The state conferences are therefore saying, Hand this new scheme to us for inspection and application.

These adjustments between the state and national bodies must be made with the utmost pains and good-will. It is true, and it must be kept clear, that the one desire is for increased efficiency. No detriment to the glorious work of our national societies will be permitted. No injustice will be done them by the state bodies. On the contrary, the conferences purpose to give the societies a better hear-

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ing in the churches and to offer themselves as new agencies for presenting the national forms of work, raising increased funds and training the churches to systematic giving. The conferences should commend all the national societies to the churches, inspire and hold the churches to their duty, welcome the secretaries and agents of the societies, instruct and stimulate the churches, operate detailed financial plans, thus coworking with the national societies. Nothing less is proposed by any state. It may indeed seem new and strange to the officers of the societies to hear the conferences claim to be in charge of their own fields. But it is believed that all parties concerned will soon discover power and a superior brand of Congregationalism in the new measures with their system, their multiplied leaders and interests, their distributed responsibility.

If it be asked in what actual terms adjustments have already been arranged in any states, the reply must be very partial. In some **Experiments in Several States** cases cooperation has been initiated at useful points, in the faith that no problems in fraternal adjustment will prove baffling. As concrete examples, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Northern California may be cited again.

In California the state and national adjustment is affected by the residence among us of district secretaries or agents of the national societies whose field is the entire Pacific Coast. With

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these brethren, as also with state superintendents of national forms of work, we have the happiest relations. We have entered upon our new administration with the cordial cooperation of these men, believing that all adjustments will prove manageable as they emerge. Our board of twenty-one directors is entrusted with our state-wide future, the relations with the national societies being one of the main things left confidently in their charge. In Michigan, while nothing has been formulated in the constitution or in resolution, the state leaders and forces are a unit in insisting that all national work in the state shall be under state direction, and that there shall be in Michigan no officers or agents of the national societies wholly directed from without the state.

The most definite statement of relations thus far made is by the Wisconsin State Association. It is as follows: "That the Association through its board of directors shall control the work now done by The Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society, but the national society shall be consulted in the appointment of superintendent and missionaries and in the initiation of all important measures. All money received for the Sunday-school work in our denomination in Wisconsin shall pass through the hands of the treasurer of the Association, but the national society shall receive from such offerings and bequests an amount to be determined from year to year

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by the board of directors. Appeals to the churches of Wisconsin in behalf of the national society shall be through the office of the State Association. The directors shall organize this work under a committee of their own appointment, of which committee the superintendent of Sunday-school work shall be a member *ex officio*. While the work of this committee shall be distinct from the work of the home missionary committee, it shall be coordinate with home missionary work, and the Sunday-school and home missionary committees shall have a joint conference at least once a year. The superintendent and Sunday-school committee shall use the office force of the Association in their work and shall use the association office for their headquarters."

The points here are state management under a superintendent and committee of Sunday-school work, consultation with the national society, contributions to the national treasury, appeals by national society agents to be made through the state office, the state Sunday-school superintendent and committee to use the state headquarters and to be appointed by and responsible to the state board of directors. The design in both Michigan and Wisconsin is to develop similar relations of state superintendence and cooperation with all the national societies alike, reducing the present diversity to order.

An easier adjustment is that between state conference and local associations. What the

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churches through their representatives plan for the whole state can best be put into execution through the local associations. **Conference and Associations** These are smaller groups of the same churches. There should be no friction within the state. The Congregational way is to appoint an active committee in each local association to cooperate with the central committee of the conference. In Michigan there are such advisory committees heading up in the board of trustees in the conference. The same is true in Wisconsin, Ohio and California. Thus the whole state shares the responsibilities of administration. The two main points are always and everywhere the same:—local responsibility all along the working line and effective state unity.

Thus we reach the question of administrative headship in a Congregational state. What form shall the state executive take? **Administrative Headship** What the states are working at is, as we have seen, to unite all activities under a single administration. The unifying body must be the state conference with a board of directors large enough to manage the whole diversified work. The board should contain at least one representative from each local association in the state. In Michigan the directors number one from each local association and four at large; in Wisconsin the same plus moderator, registrar, and treasurer; in Southern California and Northern California twenty-one similarly distributed;

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in Ohio, twenty-seven; in South Dakota, fifteen. The aim is to make these directors the responsible managers, more or less directly, of the total state work. They may act through bureaus and committees, and even through separate home missionary corporations. Wherever the latter can legally be dispensed with, the unity of work and the immediate management of the directors may be complete. In some states, notably Michigan and Wisconsin, the directors are already going one step further. They are putting the state work under a single executive, elected either by the directors or the conference, responsible to the board and subject to its direction. In these states the superintendent is in charge not merely of the home missionary work as heretofore, but of all forms of work now organized together under the directors of the incorporated state conference. The different departments — home missionary, Sunday-school, church building, foreign missionary and others — he will conduct through heads of departments and committees. The whole force is the executive agency of the board of directors, which is itself responsible to the conference. This complete unification of state work is rational and practical. It is also proper and consistent Congregationalism.

We come now to superintendence as an element in Congregationalism. Its discussion is most pertinent here, because in state work it is most in evidence and debate. But it opens out



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into larger proportions. Let the precise point of inquiry be noted. The question is not whether the employment of executive agents is germane to the Congregational polity; no body of churches can grow and serve without such leaders. The question is not whether to admit into our system an element hitherto rejected; the element is present. The question is, Shall we build it up, and how far? We are quite accustomed to the class of men called superintendents; shall we enlarge their scope and influence? This is one point of difference between denominations which are already practising federation and even discussing union. Along this line of administrative superintendence how far can we safely and wisely go, either to promote our own efficiency or to meet other bodies inclined to union?

**Superintendence  
a Factor in  
Congregationalism**

Let us bear in mind our large use of this form of service. We find it in the secretaryships of our national societies. We have it nearer home in the district secretaries and state superintendents sustained by these societies. We have superintendents or secretaries of city missions, of church extension societies, of Sunday-school work, of Christian Endeavor, of the Brotherhood, and of other lines of work. Chief of all for current developments in our polity are the state home missionary superintendents or secretaries. This is the office which the states now

**Enlarged Superintendence  
Its Dangers and Usefulness**

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reorganizing are enlarging, to bear in some cases cited the total administrative headship of the state work. The very first step in the enlargement of this office is sensitively challenged. The scope of the office has been confined to our home missionary churches. But surely a dividing line solely financial between churches, separating the one division as independent from the other as dependent, is far from making a fraternal and gracious distinction. It is proposed to minimize this distinction and make the state superintendent the servant of all the churches. This is questioned, resented, resisted by some leaders and churches, as derogatory to themselves and a menace to local autonomy. But it is neither, when rightly constituted, manned and understood. Curiously, some persons and churches are sensitive to the presence of a Congregational superintendent suffered to run at large in a state. His mere existence irritates. If he venture to ask a church, Is there anything you care to have me do for you? the question sounds like a threat against liberty; surely it contains the veiled approach of authority; the man is a fledgling bishop! It is, however, interesting to learn from any home missionary superintendent, how few churches there are which never call upon him for any sort of service. It is safe to say that there is no such official in the land whose desk is often free from business pertaining to self-sustaining churches. It is already happily and fruitfully true that our

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churches and superintendents are ignoring the line between missionary and non-missionary churches, that the superintendents are regarded as servants of all the churches, and that to forbid our self-supporting churches to seek further service from the superintendents would embarrass our state conditions as few other things could. To promote the home missionary superintendent to be superintendent of all the churches would be scarcely more than formal recognition of actual fact. And then to bring together in his executive hand all the reins of state activity would be simply to consolidate our scattered interests around the natural and prepared center.

Such an enlarged superintendency lies wholly in the realm of administration, having no legislative or judicial function. It is clothed with no irresponsible authority, possessed of no coercion; nothing is in Congregationalism. It is influential leadership; influential certainly and strongly, else it need not be at all. It is service and sacrifice, not lordship. It is the organ of the churches' mutual care. Its opportunity is wide and grand, its duties infinitely exacting, its devotion even unto death. Here, as everywhere in Congregationalism and democracy, the personal equation bulks large. It is nothing to say that the wrong man in this office may grow lordly and tyrannical. In a world of freedom all perversions are possible. But as no man taketh this power unto himself,

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so no man retains it by personal prowess. We, the churches, appoint him, and supersede him for cause. I heard Dr. Gladden ridicule the fear of authority, saying that he should like to see a Congregational officer attempt authority over the churches; forthwith we would make him wish that he had never been born. We need not deny the tendency of official position to entrench itself and put forth power. But if any concrete case of it proceed far, the fault is the people's, the remedy being always in their hands. Do not illustrate by the "big stick" in politics or industry. In neither industry nor politics are there equal incentives to righteousness, service, and sacrifice; in neither are evil men so weak in social resources, so exposed to rebuke and displacement. No system of things is so secure from official tyranny as a body of free churches, whose reliance is upon genuine moral character and Christian experience, whose instrument is right reason. In our Congregational order we may develop the executive superintendency without imperiling the liberties of our churches. No superintendent can obtain his office or hold it save by the concurrent action of the churches. No superintendent can touch a single church against its will. Be it repeated till "the youngest critic has died," — we are a body of free churches; our officers are our servants, always subject to our will. On such a basis we may organize a unified and effective order, and have for our responsible leaderships

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Christian men too choice in character, too winsome in approach, too wise in counsel, too resourceful in strategy, too effective in action, too unreserved in sacrifice, too divinely attended, to be suspected of ambition or begrudged the *nth* power of influential service. Any system of elected and removable superintendence is safe in Congregationalism. Until we develop it, we are behind our duty and beneath our opportunity. Dr. Mackennal said again, in his address from the chair of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, "If it be recognized that the government of each particular church is in its membership, we may adopt diocesan and connexional methods of administration, not only without mischief, but even with the best results."



LECTURE V  
NATIONAL UNITY





## V

### NATIONAL UNITY

AT the point reached by the preceding lecture, there were more than twoscore separate state conferences, each composed of the Congregational churches of a single state, and vitally related to the local associations in the same territory. Our construction of an adequate administrative system must not, as we have heard from Mr. John Fiske, stop short of achieving national unity. The field is the country, cut and uncut by state boundaries, and the field is the world. There are problems and opportunities sectional, national, continental and ecumenical, requiring larger regimentation and "farflung battle lines." This we discovered a century ago. For a hundred years we have lived in these greater visions, and have wrought unto the ends of the earth. Apparatus for each new line of service came at call, in the best way, the only way it could come, by experiment and invention; it was, in Professor Ladd's phrase, "Progress by individual inquiry."<sup>1</sup> The Congregational churches knew not how to rise up all together, act in full national force through accredited representatives, and create a system of agencies expansive enough for the

<sup>1</sup> Principles of Church Polity, p. 57.

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growing day. Such churches as desired to—and that was the great majority—accepted and employed the societies launched by a few organizing individuals. Those unrepresentative, self-governing societies were true Congregational products of their time, suited to Congregational spirit and action. They were supported with fervent and generous devotion, and drew our independent churches together in common service. And when in these last days the spirit of Congregational unity began to stir within us, behold among us several unifying agencies of truly national proportions and influence! It was only too plain, however, that since each was partial and specialized, independent of the others and the churches, and was missionary rather than administrative, no one of them was capable of organizing a truly national unity of the Congregational churches.

Our unifying body is the National Council. It came to the kingdom for this hour. Far-sighted men, they who organized it in 1871, **The National Council** “on the grave of buried prejudices.” The Congregational churches of the United States, not their associations and conferences, are the constituent members, as saith its constitution. The delegates to the meetings of the Council, elected in the local and state bodies, are representatives of the churches which directly compose those bodies and the Council. Thus our highest administrative agency is but one step re-

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moved — it were better called a half step — from the churches themselves.

The National Council is a permanent body, having perennial life like the conferences, associations and the churches themselves. **A Permanent**

There are some who speak as if the **Body** Council had no enduring existence, sprang anew into being on the stroke of a gavel once in three years and dropped dead a few days later under the same magic touch. It is the temporary session of a permanent body that is opened and closed upon a gavel stroke by a few technical words. If this was not intended at Oberlin in 1871, we have grown to the stronger idea. It is explicitly stated in the constitution, at any rate, and we may hope our fathers knew how well they were building that platform. "The Congregational churches of the United States," they said, "by elders and messengers assembled, do now associate themselves in National Council"; "the churches will meet in National Council every third year"; "at each triennial session" — the phrase is "triennial session"—certain officers shall be chosen "to serve from the close of such session to the close of the next triennial session." It is the constitution of a living organism, never disappearing altogether, never unproductive, but rising into full view and formal action once in three years.

In the section of the constitution just quoted, provision is made for secretary, registrar and

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treasurer, who shall hold office and continue active during the triennium; also for a provisional **Moderator of** committee to arrange for the next **National Council** regular session and for any special session that may be called. As to the *ad interim* standing of these officers and this committee, there can be no difference of opinion; nor respecting any and all standing committees, for these also are expressly provided for in the constitution. Over the moderatorship there has arisen since the meeting of 1901 an earnest disagreement. The moderator elected then was the Rev. Amory H. Bradford, D.D., of New Jersey, of bluer Congregational blood than John Wise or Nathaniel Emmons, and equally loyal to Congregational spirit and principle. Believing himself moderator until his successor should be elected, and desiring to make the office useful between sessions, he ventured to speak out in the organized silence of Congregationalism. It was a monstrous thing to do! Some told him so when they had caught their breath. Moderator of what? There was nothing to be moderator of between October 1901 and October 1904. But he went right on serving the churches as moderator of the National Council of the Congregational Churches of the United States until his successor was elected in the triennial session at Des Moines. That successor was busier yet in the same capacity until the present moderator was elected in 1907 at Cleveland. In the current triennium

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our leader is rendering much admirable service, is generous with time and influence, and is in no danger of being declared an *ad interim* incompetent. Many of us are sure we have a standing moderator of the National Council; some refuse to acknowledge him. Congregationalists are not compelled to take what they do not want. We are waiting hopefully for that unanimity of which we sing. In 1871 our fathers had not reached this issue of a permanent moderatorship. In their constitution they ordered the election of a moderator at the beginning of every stated or special session "to preside over its deliberations"; in the following sentence, however, they direct him as moderator to open with an address the following meeting of the Council. A pertinent by-law has been added since then, which says, "The presiding officers shall retain their offices until their successors are chosen," etc. At Des Moines we were instructed in a sincere and very expert speech from the floor that that clause of the by-law, when enacted, was not intended to mean what it says. At the present time we desire to have it mean what it says. It would seem wise, however, to take such action as may set the whole matter at rest.

In Congregationalism some one does a thing, and presently the rest of us exclaim, Why, that's right! So now we have a stand-<sup>The First</sup>ing moderator, and not merely a <sup>Congregationalist</sup> sessional presiding officer. We could not longer

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do without him. The national organization of six thousand Christian churches is an important factor in the social order. Its moderatorship is an eminent post of honor and service, — not a prize of ambitious politics, but a stewardship entrusted to capacity and consecration. Its occupant should be a man of national proportions, administrative ability, and spiritual power. He is for the time the first man in the Congregational land. We have not yet reached, we may never reach, the point of expecting our moderator to devote his whole time to this office. We could not call a pastor away from his church or a layman out of his business without at least fair promise of a service longer than three years. Nor is this so needful while the secretaryship continues powerful and productive.

The secretaryship of the National Council, as things now stand, should be the most conspicuous position in the leadership of our churches. There is, of course, large room for divergent conceptions of it. To me it seems mainly an outdoor office. There is much indoor work to be done, of which the Year Book is the most palpable product. The churches should enable the secretary to conduct this indoor work through assistants and employees. He himself, being a man of national size, and *persona grata* everywhere, should be out among the churches. All the state conferences and many of the local associations should know

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his voice and feel his heart. He would carry everywhere the great issues of our organized churches. In his person would be greeted Congregationalism incarnate, and men would know it as a living thing. In many parts of the land his appearance would do more than anything else to give Congregationalism a local habitation and a name. Through him churches and pastors would learn, for example, that the two-cent annual assessment is a real and reasonable thing, and that honor is involved in its prompt payment. A secretary of the Council might, from his office desk, desire just such far-stretching ministry, and might wonder at not being invited in all directions. It would certainly be well for the churches in their organized bodies to request his service, and I can think of but one good reason why they might hesitate to do so. But when a man becomes a secretary he does not forfeit his native right of initiative and administration. Let him invite himself out and range freely among us. This office is a post of eminence and leadership. We elect its incumbent for his capacity as leader. Let us then expect him to lead, giving him support, attention, cooperation. His salary should be adequate to first-class constructive ability. And ample funds should be furnished for extensive service afield. It would be interesting, perhaps painful, to learn how generally our churches and ministers still conceive of the National Council secretary as an office employee

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rather than as an organizer of national forces for world-wide enterprise.

National Council finances cannot be passed over in silence. We have reached a pass wherein **Finances of** we must presently, perhaps at the **National Council** next meeting of the Council, choose between two alternatives: either to increase considerably the Council's income for operating expenses or to decline our enlarging service to the Kingdom of God. For some years the annual income of the Council stood at one and one-half cents per Congregational church-member. At that rate seven hundred thousand members would give \$10,500 a year. Since the last meeting of the Council two cents per member have been called for, amounting to \$14,000 from seven hundred thousand members. The state conferences are the bodies to collect this money and pay it into the national treasury. It is surprising and humiliating to learn that there is always a number of states delinquent in payment, some of them two or even three years in arrears, and that these national moneys are never paid in full. Ultimate responsibility rests upon the churches. There are pastors and church officers who flatly refuse or silently repudiate their part of this common obligation. For such men or groups of men current life has the sharp term "grafters"; they gather in as gratuity the standing benefits of membership in national Congregationalism. Such



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conduct is indefensible; it does not fall under casuistry; it is simply wrong. Finance is never unmoral, but often immoral. The guilty men and churches cannot be imprisoned for debt; they may yield to Congregational sentiment as that grows vigorous and searching.

But what do we want of funds, and increased funds in our national administration? The salary and expenses of the national secretary have been mentioned. The Year-Book, indispensable to our denominational life, is an expensive kind of book. The salary and office expenses of the treasurer are not large, but real. Beyond these there spreads out an enlarging scope of official and committee work, for which at present we have almost no provision. We appoint standing committees to transact important business between sessions; these committees cannot count on having their bare traveling expenses paid for a single meeting in the three years. There are lines of new work which require increasing expenditure, such as the Brotherhood movement, interdenominational comity, evangelism, social reform. The National Council has initiated work on all these lines, appointed committees, even approved the employment of special agents or secretaries, without offering the least financial provision for the work. This state of affairs cannot, it would seem, be continued. Our six thousand churches must not be limited to the service

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of men who can afford and are interested to pay their own expenses or are able and willing to solicit contributions for their special tasks. Congregational work is already too multiform and expensive for these devoted and generous men. Must we imprison ourselves within the little forms of work which can be carried on in the good old way? The alternatives are endowment funds for administration, or increased *per capita* dues, punctually and regularly paid, from all our members in the land. I believe the Council must seriously undertake this vital matter. In the present triennium some of our indispensable pastors and laymen have declined committee service, because of their quickening conviction on this financial problem.

Nor have we yet the whole financial predicament before us. There is another factor in it which bears more sharply than many **Expenses of Delegates** would have it upon the proper constitution and efficiency of the National Council. I refer to the expenses of delegates to the meetings of the Council. Our national meetings never can be completely representative so long as attendance is left to the convenience and financial resources of individuals. At every meeting there are large gaps in our ranks, mainly according to distance save for special modifying circumstances. And the actual attendants are in very many cases not those we should choose to send, but those who can and will go. It is not that any

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pastor or layman is unworthy to go; we are democrats. On the contrary, just because all are worthy, we desire to distribute the high privilege of service and culture. We desire to be represented by the men of our choice, and at special junctures by those best fitted for the issues to be wrought out. Large numbers of us have already fallen out of sympathy with those pastors and laymen, attendant on the Council again and again, who resist the change which would alter considerably the personnel of the meetings. We ought to be entirely free to send what delegates we would. The matter cannot be left to state and local bodies. These have always been at liberty to pay their own delegates' expenses, but they neither do it nor can do it. In so broad a land the burden remains too unequal.

The only solution of the problem, the only way to assemble whomsoever we would, the only way to enlist gradually our total force, **No Other Solution** the only way to make our national administration a real and vital thing to our ministers and churches everywhere, is to provide amply and administer equitably a central fund for delegates' expenses. True enough, we have sorrowful object-lessons on either side of us, awakening dread of the difficulties and dangers of such a fund. But nothing great was ever done in dread of difficulty and danger. The Congregational churches of the United States in National Council assembled are six thousand strong, doing

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enormous business for the Kingdom of God. As at present managed, the frequent remark is far from groundless, though severe and unjust, that the Council appears to be composed not of six thousand churches, but of certain numbers of interested individuals able to attend. The critic should discover the motives of genuine consecration underlying personal interest in the men whose costly and faithful service sustains the national administration which alone gives coherence and scope to our sectional and local life. But the criticism should be silenced by altering the general conditions.

The change now transpiring in the character of the Council's meetings is viewed with some concern. It is a matter which calls for careful attention and provision. Time was when the meetings were largely of inspiration and communion. Noble addresses were heard with leisurely attention and discussed with sustained interest. At present the Provisional Committee is hesitating to invite speakers and assure them the time assigned them. At the Cleveland meeting the encroachments of business repeatedly threatened an *impasse* in the program. The difficulty will increase if Congregationalists continue to enjoy doing business in open session.

We must give business the right of way. With our glorious themes and speakers we have other occasions to commune. But this is our one opportunity in three years to shape our national

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unity, to initiate and advance measures, and to authorize and direct our *ad interim* administration. The Council meeting is **Business Sessions** therefore a business session. The **Mainly** program should be conformed to that idea. The pressure grows heavier. No wonder the question is up, How long will triennial sessions suffice for the business of so large a body of churches? No man could wish to multiply meetings. Possibly we might appoint an executive or business committee charged with more general functions between sessions.

Among considerations of national unity, main interest is directed just now to the relations between our missionary societies **National Council and National Societies** and the Council. Preceded by no small amount of discussion, the matter was taken up at Cleveland, and the following recommendation passed by the Council: "That the administration of the benevolent interests of our churches be directed by the representatives of the churches in national organization, and that this Council appoint a commission of fifteen, including a representative from each of our benevolent societies, who shall report at its next regular meeting such an adjustment of these societies to the body of the churches represented in this Council as shall secure such direction, care being taken to safeguard existing constitutional provisions of these societies and the present membership of their boards of control, but also to

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lodge hereafter the creation and continuance of these administrative boards in the suffrage of the representatives of the churches.”

This recommendation states clearly the desires of those who favor including the missionary societies in the achievement of national unity. They believe it wise to bring these main lines of our service into such representative relation to the churches supporting them as can be secured only through the Council. Past and present relations are generally understood. The unrepresentative status of each society was persisted in long enough to set up chronic irritation. Improved relations are still only partially representative, not yet gearing and belting the societies into the Congregational system. The societies have approached the churches each in its own separate way, negotiating with associations or conferences or state missionary societies. Though they are national societies, they have not formed alliance with the national organization of our churches. Only one of them, Ministerial Relief, is an agency of the National Council. The rest remain independent, self-governing bodies. They have barely begun to labor together as members one of another and their several affairs parts of a single enterprise. Statements here must be general, with no time for detailed exceptions. Substantial and hopeful advances in the relations of the societies to one another, to the

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churches and to organized Congregationalism are observed with satisfaction. The ordinary mortal hailed the Joint Missionary Campaign as opening a new era of cooperation.

The recommendation of the National Council quoted above shows what more is asked. The Committee on Polity introduced their recommendations with these sentences: "With this view of the Congregational order as representative, and not purely independent, your committee unite in the judgment that local, state and national associations afford ample organization for the direction of all of our denominational activities, and that the function of these organizations may be inclusive of all such interests, not imperiling, but directly safeguarding the autonomy and liberty of the local church. Believing, therefore, that in the interest of simplicity, unity and efficiency our organism should be representative, we urge the elimination of all such organizations as are not under the direction of our representative bodies." The action thus recommended by the National Council would result at least in the coordination of our national societies under the direction of the Council. Just how, will have to be worked out. The Council appointed the commission of fifteen to report the wisest procedure. The Congregational Board of Ministerial Relief illustrates what might be done with all the societies.

Our Baptist brethren, more independent hither-

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to than we, have passed us, and are showing us the way and the spirit of the way. At their **Baptist Reorganization** General Convention in 1908 they said: "The general activities of the denomination are now carried on by eight incorporated societies. These are entirely independent one of another, and while deriving their support from the denomination at large, are legally independent of the denomination as a whole. This form of organization, dating as far back as 1812, was a natural outgrowth of circumstances — indeed there seemed to be no other way at the time to attain the ends in view. . . . In these days, however, the old methods are out of date. The general work of the denomination, it is believed, will be more economically and more effectively rendered under a suitable plan of definite coordination. Such a plan is in accordance with the practise of large business interests to-day and would command the confidence of laymen whose support is essential to the prosperity of the work.

"Be it resolved by the Northern Baptist Convention: That at the earliest practicable date there should be an organic union between the various general denominational societies and the Northern Baptist Convention, to the end that the denomination through its convention may be able to determine a suitable related policy for all its general activities," etc.

This action was unanimous. And best of all,



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the societies readily promised to begin working the new plan without waiting for the legal steps to be taken. Have our Congregational societies been heard offering as much? We hope, however, to pursue organic union in the same unanimous way.

A further reorganization of our missionary agencies seems wise to many, and has not escaped the attention of the Commission of Fifteen. To say that the sevenfold character of our Congregational work is confusing to our churches is to put it mildly. It is doubtful if a majority of our church-members could give all the names of our seven societies. Only a minority of our churches have been carrying the full number of our societies upon their benevolence lists, many churches contributing to but two or three. Doubtless the plan of proportionate benevolence will gradually improve this situation. Nothing, however, would relieve it so thoroughly as to reduce the number of societies. Such reduction would also tend, as constantly appears in the business world, to simplify administration, diminish operating expenses and multiply efficiency.

It has been suggested, as one of several possible readjustments, that our seven societies might be compacted into three:

1. A foreign missionary society—the American Board.

2. A home missionary society, the resultant of the Congregational Home Missionary Society,

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the Congregational Church Building Society, and the Board of Ministerial Relief.

3. A home-land religious educational society, a union of the American Missionary Association, the Sunday-School Society, and the Congregational Education Society.

Such a readjustment would leave the publication work standing by itself as a business agency, serving the whole denomination, capable of large expansion and efficiency.

These are natural and effective departments of benevolence, as is seen in other branches of the Church. Were we now projecting our work on a clear field, we should probably lay it out in precisely these three departments. A popular vote throughout our churches would, with little doubt, declare for these. To remodel the sevenfold structure of a century may be more difficult than to build threefold from the foundation; yet the designs in this case do not differ radically, and the alterations would be almost confined to internal partitions and rearrangement of space and sentiment. Some such consolidation of our work, under the direction of the National Council, would answer admirably the crescendo call for thorough systematization of our Congregational fellowship. The purpose extends to the achievement of national unity, and is as urgent there as at nearer points. The demand is not merely to approve individually and locally, but also to control in our representative organizations the

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agencies which we entrust with our funds and business. This demand may be mistaken. The desired unification may prove unmanageable. But if it should appear to be the mature judgment of the churches, we should not shrink from the application of our principle of evolution and progress. The chief desideratum is a thorough study of the situation in the best of spirit.

It is time, of course, to repeat the ancient and honorable reminder that such a national body as is now being described, set at the **Liberty Not Threatened** head of the Congregational representative system, does not threaten the liberties of the churches. It declines legislative and judicial functions. It has no authority to intrude into the private affairs of a single church. It offers no coercive interference to conferences and associations in their respective fields. As we have seen, the churches organize the Council, and the movement is from below upward. The Council has nothing but what is left over from the lower bodies — left over because too great for even state management. The Council is a national union for national purposes. On these wide issues it formulates the thought and will of the churches. It spreads these formulations before all the churches at once. It organizes action in which the whole denomination can cooperate. It has apparatus for executing the ascertained will of the denomination. Thus it is the servant of the whole body,

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the agency through which six thousand churches may act as one on lines of universal Congregational duty.

Let me quote Dr. Mackennal again at this highest of constructive points. He says, "I am heartily at one with those who believe that national religious needs demand a National Council with power to administer its own resolutions; and I think it would be quite within our wisdom to devise a scheme, which, while rigidly safeguarding the autonomy of the churches in all which concerns their congregational life, should also make the Union (the National Council) autonomous in all the larger matters committed to its charge."<sup>1</sup> There is food for further thought here. It must be frankly acknowledged — boasted, if you will — that we have not that corporate autonomy of which he spoke. We do not give our organized bodies power to administer their own resolutions; we give them

<b>Corporate</b>	permission to persuade us to admin-
<b>Autonomy</b>	ister their resolutions. We are so

wrapped up in the autonomy of the Christian man and the single church, that we never have tried to devise a scheme to make our organized bodies autonomous in their respective spheres. We autonomous men and churches surrender autonomy when, without any extraneous elements whatever, we unite in associations, conferences and National Council. Suppose the Council

<sup>1</sup> *Evolution of Congregationalism*, p. 211.

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should say to a state conference, "Brethren, we have all covenanted together in a union which involves the common pledge of two cents a member annually; pay your share of it." The chances are, because the facts have been, that from various sections of that state would rise autonomous growls, which being interpreted would mean, "I never pledged two cents a member, and you can't make me pay it. I'll pay it when I get ready — if I want to." The Council's officers know better than to exercise corporate autonomy towards anybody. We all know how their calls to service read: "Dear Brethren, the National Council, lamenting its inability to consult every church-member beforehand on each separate question, but trusting in the good-will of the churches — which in your persons has never yet failed us — would respectfully inform you, etc., etc. . . . and would count it a great favor if you would kindly consider whether, at no very distant day, you will bear your share in these important proceedings to which your National Council is in honor bound, but on which it is most regrettable that several of your leading members were unable to be present to vote." While we appreciate such deferential approach to our personal and local throne, we are well aware how little of the world's earnest business could be conducted in that fashion. What we still have too much of is not personal and local autonomy in personal and local affairs; it is personal and local

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autonomy in corporate affairs, independent decision how far we will act, or whether we will act at all, in affairs for which we have become jointly responsible as members of these several denominational bodies. At this point, as suggested in a preceding lecture, correction of our Congregational system is indicated. Some of us surely agree with Dr. Mackennal that Congregationalists have wisdom enough "to devise a scheme, which, while rigidly safeguarding the autonomy of the churches in all which concerns their congregational life, should also make our unifying bodies (the Union) autonomous in all the larger matters committed to their (its) charge." Therein would be truly achieved "national unity without weakening the sense of personal and local independence."

We have been moving hitherto, as we proposed in setting out, from below upward, from local church to National Council, from **Toward National Unity** local autonomy to national unity. For three hundred years our churches have been advancing in this direction. The other polities have had authority above the churches, and have been conceding more and more local independence. We have overdone the latter, and are now constructing real unity; a unity, however, which shall not be at any point or in any degree apart from the churches, but everywhere and totally of the churches, by the churches and for the churches. We will not even segregate our min-

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istry in orders of clergy, presbyteries, or ministerial associations. We will not even put our parish business out of our hand for a twelve-month by means of an authoritative session. The affairs within our reach we will handle by direct democracy, the greater affairs by representative democracy. Our power shall continue to be intelligence and right reason shaped into public opinion. Yet will we draw together into firm and enduring array, into fellowship as wide as the country and real everywhere, into unified Christian service. We will live at liberty in the private parish ways where souls are born from above and learn their Master's sacrifice. We will organize mighty and dependable union for the great affairs of the Kingdom, wherein petty independence is impotent.

It is not too much to say that in working out such an adequate administrative system we should be giving the world a new achievement. There is nothing quite like it. Never yet has the ecclesiastical world secured genuine and unhampered democracy, with everything—even the official ministry—standing within the scope of the local church, and then proceeded out of such entirely voluntary materials to build up effective and enduring national unity. There are many to say that it cannot even now be done, that either the democracy will be damaged or the unity will not be reached. That it has not been done is

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true. That it will one day be achieved must also be true, as God and brotherhood are real. Sometime there will be seven hundred thousand Christian men, each one free to follow what the Spirit saith to him, living happily together in churches as truly self-conducting as their members—seven hundred thousand Christian souls, or a million, glad and faithful to hold unbound their places in orderly array up to national unity, eager in such union to multiply for the love they bear Him the power He gives. It may be that that time is drawing near. It may be that we are just now those Christians. At any rate, the vision is superb; not they who do not reach it, but they who do not follow, fail.



LECTURE VI  
CONGREGATIONALISM AND  
CHURCH UNION



## VI

### CONGREGATIONALISM AND CHURCH UNION

CHRISTIAN unity is one thing, the union of churches another. Either may exist without the other. Conceivably there might be a single administrative body of churches on earth, inclusive of all church-members, in which and among whom there would be little Christian unity. Such external union would be difficult and not enduring, as church history shows. On the other hand, Christian unity in beauty and power, universal and abiding, is not dependent upon the absence of diversity and formal division. It may be said that the grand objective is essential unity and universal fellowship, with divisions solely for practical efficiency. What we have to-day is divisions unable to unite, aware of spiritual unity, with enough fellowship to flavor worship, to disturb complacency, to mitigate competition, to confuse conscience, and to lure us onward. We need not forget that it was Christian unity, not church union, for which Jesus prayed "that they may be one, even as we are," and of which he said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Yet he must be a Christian without conscience who takes

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from those divine words no rebuke against the disruptions of Christendom. For the age-long discussion has not only revealed an anemic spirit of unity, but has kept that spirit anemic. There are many who decry the cause of church union with cheers for unity and communion. Christians are one, they insist — are one so deeply that we need not labor for formal union. And you cannot get their minds upon the cruel wrongs still perpetrated in the name of Christ. The spirit is finally judged by its fruits. And down to this very day, even in this best land, many fruits of the spirit which actuates the Christian bodies are no less than frightful. The shameful facts are found in hundreds of overchurched communities with their wastes and strifes, while in administrative offices we may still hear — albeit less often — insolent refusals to correct the wrongs.

Dr. H. K. Carroll's racy description of ecclesiastical variety in our country is too true **Infinite Variety of Religions** to be merely amusing. "The first impression one gets," he says, "in studying the results of the census is that there is an infinite variety of religions in the United States. . . . Our native genius for invention has exerted itself in this direction also, and worked out some curious results. The American patent covers no less than two original Bibles — the Mormon and Oahspe — and more brands of religion, so to

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speak, than are to be found, I believe, in any other country. . . . We scarcely appreciate our advantages. . . . One may be a pagan, a Jew, or a Christian, or each in turn. If he is a pagan, he may worship in one of the numerous temples devoted to Buddha; if a Jew, he may be of the Orthodox or Reformed variety; if a Christian, he may select any one of one hundred and twenty-five or one hundred and thirty different kinds, or join every one of them in turn. He may be six kinds of an Adventist, seven kinds of a Catholic, twelve kinds of a Mennonite or Presbyterian, thirteen kinds of a Baptist, sixteen kinds of a Lutheran, or seventeen kinds of a Methodist. He may be a member of any one of one hundred and forty-three denominations, or of all in succession. If none of these suit him, he still has a choice among one hundred and fifty separate and independent congregations, which have no denominational name, creed or connection. . . . According to the scientists no atom is so small that it may not be conceived of as consisting of halves. No denomination has thus far proved too small for division. Denominations appear in the list given in this volume with as few as twenty-five members. I was reluctantly compelled to exclude from the census one with twenty-one members. The reason was, that while they insisted that they were a separate body and did not worship with other churches, they had no organized church of their own. Twelve of them were in

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Pennsylvania, divided between Philadelphia and Pittsburg, six in Illinois and three in Missouri. They were so widely scattered they could not maintain public worship.”<sup>1</sup>

Such words ought to be caricature or criminal libel, not a sober statement of facts.

We may hail an awakening conscience respecting this horror. Think how wide-spread the interest and effort toward union are.

**Current  
Movements  
Toward Union** Outside our own land the movement appears in Canada, England, Scotland, Wales, Australia, and New Zealand, and in all Protestant mission fields in the world, with advanced phases in India, China, and Japan. Many branches of the Church are engaged in it. In our own land the Federal Council is formed of thirty-three denominations holding nearly twenty millions of members. In England the Free Churches are federated in a national council. In Canada Presbyterians, Methodists and Congregationalists are working toward organic union. In Australia the present movement includes even the Church of England. In South India all the Protestant missions have united in a Missionary Conference, while Presbyterians, Reformed and Congregationalists have been fused into one body called the South India United Church. In China all the Protestant missions are federated and acting together through a series of councils. In Japan since 1900 nearly

<sup>1</sup> Religious Forces of the United States, pp. xiv, xv, xviii.

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all Protestant missions have wrought through a "Standing Committee of Cooperating Christian Missions," while at the present time practically all Japanese Christians are consummating a national federation of churches. Thus the missions have taken the lead toward union. With them close communion has been, as a missionary said years ago, the communion that shuts in, not out. They have done much to rouse and shame the home-land churches out of their lethargy, till now the whole English-speaking world at least has been "stabbed broad awake."

The agitations of this subject show, too, that multitudes of Christians, whole denominations, are discovering the difference between essentials and non-essentials, Essentials and Non-essentials in doctrine, conduct and administration. This is a great discovery for any one. The Protestant world is attaining new perspective and proportion. The result is to clear the road of petty obstacles to union.

The next discovery is breaking here and there, like the new dawn, the discovery that in essentials of doctrine multitudes of Christians and whole bodies of churches agree. If only the essentials be formulated in spiritual and fraternal terms, we make our confession of faith in a unison of wonder and joy, as appeared so beautifully in the Tri-church Council at Dayton in 1904. Therewith has come the surprise that thus the heaviest obstacle to union is being rolled away.

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Nothing has been so pitilessly divisive as doctrinal contention. It thus appears that in some cases the problem of union reduces to one of polity, adjustments in organization and property interests.

Nothing is plainer, however, than that the cause of church union must proceed in great variety. Few generalizations of **Progress by Experiment** duty can be made. The enterprise is experimental everywhere. We are not far beyond the beginning, and there is no end. Beyond the heights we see must lie other ranges of form and good. Some organic unions are being completed before our eyes, of which there is no better instance than that of the South India United Church. Other bodies are still too far apart to treat definitely with one another. Evangelicals and Unitarians cannot yet meet in doctrine. Episcopalians and free churches are still in sturdy disagreement upon historic ordination. Such bodies may cooperate in some forms of moral and religious work, may even federate as do Episcopalians with others in the Federal Council and the New York City Federation. But before negotiating union, they must spend much time in mutual approaches.

How, then, stands our Congregational duty in this imperial enterprise of the reunion of Christendom? In the first place, all Congregationalists should face toward union. This may seem to some too much to ask.



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Can we expect seven hundred thousand persons to be unanimous on a matter so deeply affecting personal duty, preference and convenience? Not, to be sure, on all details; not, perhaps, on every concrete case which might arise. But on the general theme that church union must be furthered, that the wounds of Christendom must be healed, that denominations must actually unite, and that our power must serve this cause,—so far we ought to be awake and unanimous. It is quite evident that we are far from unanimity. Some of us object to negotiations for union with any other branch of the Church. While tri-church union with United Brethren and Methodist Protestants was in hand, there were many who lay heavily in indifference and opposition. They did not judge that case on its merits; they did not prepare their own minds for unprejudiced consideration of it. Not all were of this sort who opposed that union; some did think it through and turn it down on large reasoning. But not a few allowed local and personal considerations to entrench them against so great a procedure in the Kingdom of God, while others failed to discern any significance in an attempt to heal the breaches in the walls of Zion. And so from several directions came the time-worn protest that Congregationalists might better let well enough alone.

Be it urged, then, that church union is a

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matter too momentous for indifference, thoughtlessness, ignorance or opposition; that it is now **Why not** thrust forward by the cry of human-  
**Unite?** ity and the Spirit of God in front of most other issues in religious progress; that it is the true Christian part to be seeking ways and means to promote it; that every concrete instance should find all minds antecedently hospitable and all feet ready to run; that in every case the burden of proof lies on those who decline; that the proper question is not, Why should we unite? but, Why should we not unite? not, How can we evade this predicament? but, How can we assure this advance? When two or more branches of the Church approach each other with mutual desire, their negotiations will resemble those of the Tri-church Council at Dayton, not those of the same body later at Chicago, not those of our own National Council on the same issue at Cleveland. At Chicago and Cleveland we lacked much of a unanimous purpose to find a way of union.

More than most Christians, ought Congregationalists to take this hospitable and ready posture. **Duty of** Sectarianism has been at a  
**Congrega-** low power in us. Even loyalty to  
**tionalists** our own has been weak. We have been widely sympathetic, and have lived no straitened life. We have lavishly contributed members and money beyond our own boundaries. If we cannot now as a denomination act the larger parts

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in the world drama, the greater shame is ours. We ought to welcome sincere approaches from any church bodies at any time. In negotiations we ought to stand, whether in doctrine or polity, for essentials only. With us difficulties of union would in most instances be found in administration. We understand essentials and non-essentials of doctrine; and on essentials we are in agreement with large sections of the Church. Differences of polity remain; and polity is a minor thing.

It is also worth while to remember that negotiations which fail may yet advance church union. The participants will have learned of one another, will have greeted wider horizons, will have grown in stature. Congregationalists have gained much from intercourse with United Brethren and Methodist Protestants. Abiding effects will be found operative if that negotiation breaks out again, or if some other body solicits us.

The working principle in practical church union is opportunism. Who knows what can be done? Every inch must be taken and held. Every fraternal glance must be answered in kind. Every extended hand must be clasped. Nay more, our own eyes and hands and hearts must be reaching out every way to touch and draw our brethren.

In the second place, we must, in the interest of church union, develop effective unity and loyalty

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of our own. It is not strictly true that the lion and lamb unite, certainly not on even terms, to produce a third creature better than the two originals. The result is all lion. To the lamb are left not even memories of former days that were better than these. Recall the characterization of historic Congregationalism as a river rising in New England and emptying south and west into Presbyterianism. Sometimes we think that outpour was checked in 1852 by the Albany Convention, when the disastrous Plan of Union, which cost us several thousand churches in the middle west, was abrogated. It was in good measure checked; but since then almost every ecclesiastical family has been tapping our waterways. Our power pours at last, we trust, into the kingdom of heaven; but too much of it goes thither by trickling off in dribblets to tumble over firmer banks into more acquisitive streams. Most easily of all are Congregationalists lured into other folds. It is to our credit that we are broad-minded and hold no petty shibboleth to be the only open sesame to heaven; but we ought to stop dissipating our energies. It is time to believe hard in ourselves, in the Congregational Church, in Congregational methods and spirit. We need strength for treating as a church body with other bodies. Firm organization will render us more fit, not less, for union. When strong forces unite, then there is gain. The

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Kingdom comes as distinct factors coalesce in a richer and higher unity.

In the tri-church discussions the question kept recurring whether Congregationalists had coherence, whether we really constituted an organism, whether, in case union were voted by the three national bodies, our Congregational churches could be led into it. The question was pertinent. Certain it is that we cannot carry all our churches and ministers into any union upon the call even of their own representatives in National Council. Whether to ratify and join the union or refuse to do so would have to be left to every local church. Any church would be free to desert the advancing host. A strong minority might fall out and maintain the old body on the old ground. A majority even might hold back, discrediting the whole affair. It is impossible for us to deny that weakness in our organization. It is weakness for the purpose of church union, at least for any attempt at speedy union; for ours is the slow way of popular enlightenment and conviction. On the whole, however, we count it strength, and decline to alter our method. We never shall advance in blind obedience to leaders. But we shall strengthen our internal bonds and acquire a firmer and more loyal coherence. Our corporate life will be more robust, pervasive and retentive. It will grow more certain that, when an issue has finally been decided upon full deliberation, prac-

**Movement by  
Enlightened  
Conviction**

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tically all of us will move together. Then, if obviously fitter to survive alone, fitter also shall we be to negotiate and unite.

We need, in the third place, to understand and use certain important advantages which we enjoy in the department of polity. The world movement has been toward freedom and democracy, and there can be no return. Freedom, once possessed, is not surrendered. If lost, the battle will be fought out again, whatever waits. Union movements must crystallize near the points of greatest advance. Denominations which are free cannot return to unite with others which lie under authority; the latter must come forward. Herein we of the Congregational polity — Congregationalists and others — lead the ecclesiastical world. We are the freest. It is not bigotry which forbids us to unite with any but the free; it is the command of life itself. We may and must develop coherence, leadership and united action; but this, as we have seen, is not to fall back into fetters, but to advance out of individualistic into organized democracy.

Now this freedom of ours may at any moment block a particular negotiation for union. In the main, however, it gives us large advantage. Human progress is bringing others forward. In this free land all the other polities have perforce developed their free elements. We sometimes say that Con-

**Congregational-  
ism an Ideal  
Polity**

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gregationalism is fitted to be the denominational solvent. That it cannot be just as it stands today. Other bodies have a compactness, solidity, *esprit de corps*, effective leadership, which will not be surrendered and are not incompatible with freedom. These we must acquire, while other bodies come forward to meet our freedom. Congregationalism is suited to advanced stages of life. It is, indeed, in its elementary practise, easy for new members, new churches, new frontiers, new missionary conditions. But for its best employment it requires good measures of popular intelligence, steadiness, self-control, initiative; these firm-based upon inherited and renewed moral character imbued with the spirit of love and of Christ. What could we do in some hot hours of mob violence, when the Roman hierarchy has been able to quench the fury and folly of the hordes which dare not defy the throne? "Congregationalism," wrote Dr. Dale, "is an ideal polity. This is at once its reproach and its glory. The transcendent prerogatives and powers which it claims for the Church lie beyond the reach of communities which are not completely penetrated and transfigured by the Spirit of Christ. But as churches approach more nearly to the perfection to which Christ has called them, their authority becomes more and more august, and they enter more and more fully into the possession of the blessedness which is their inheritance in him."

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Close to this lies another advantage which we should use tirelessly. The hope of reaching **Union on** church union in the aggregate **Local Fields** leads through the local churches. True and lasting church union is no less than conformity of heart and character, separate denominations growing into likeness and love. It is labor lost for officials to arrange a formal union of bodies of churches which have not yet discovered one another and clasped hands. It has seemed to many that the federation movement was in far sounder youth in England and Wales than in our own land. Here, as was truly said at the outset, it has been federation at the top, the denominational leaders attempting through the national bodies to bring together the many corporations as if into a great ecclesiastical trust. The Free Church Council of England and Wales has been federation at the bottom. That movement has covered the whole land, from the Scotch border to Land's End — cities, villages, hamlets, countrysides, with local councils, every church enlisted, denominational barriers lowered, no gaps left between parishes, every neglected home and every lost or laden soul sought out for ministry. You can predict the effect of such mighty causes. Can any denominational estrangements or contentions withstand such gravity of love? Our federation at the top will never win and hold until from the officers' quarters it overruns the field. But if now the leaders



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of the thirty-three denominations whose names appear in the Federal Council can actually lead out their millions of members in federated action on the local fields, the day of real union will dawn. The advantages of separate divisions and machinery pertain mainly to leaders, central offices, large churches. The evils of sectarianism press hardest on the common people, small churches and their pastors in the meager fields, where the bills of fanaticism and local jealousies are paid in blood money.

The way of wisdom, then, is exactly our Congregational way. We must labor for concrete union on local fields, and start **The Congregational Way** the cry up the line. Popular movements often burst suddenly into mighty power after a season of silent preparation. So the temperance movement now, amazing all but those who have guided the quiet work for years in church and school and home. So the direct primary movement in politics, which has run by its own inner force since 1860 well-nigh over the land. Church union is now getting quiet seed-sowing in all quarters, in Sunday-school and home missionary work, in foreign missions, in new cooperation of agents, superintendents, pastors and churches, in brotherhoods and young people's movements, in more and more frequent organic union of churches: the summer growth will be short and swift, I believe, and the harvest not far ahead. We may

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awake any morning to a great popular uprising in church union, so commanding that denominational lines will be scorned, and even the great polity lines be for a time as though they were not. I find it already said openly that even now "the old classification of church polities into the Episcopalian, the Presbyterian and the Congregational has ceased to be of practical moment."

The most hopeful field, however, for union effort seems to me to lie within each great polity, and within the family groups. Here are found the points of least resistance and the lines of strongest contact. A few more words from Dr. Carroll will best reveal the possibilities. He says: "A closer scrutiny of the list [of our church bodies] shows that many of these one hundred and forty-three denominations differ only in name. Without a single change in doctrine or polity the seventeen Methodist bodies could be reduced to three or four, the twelve Presbyterian to three, the twelve Mennonite to two, and so on. The differences in many cases are only sectional or historical. The slavery question was the cause of not a few divisions, and matters of discipline were responsible for a large number. Arranging the denominations in groups or families, and counting as one family each the twelve Mennonite, the seventeen Methodist, the thirteen Baptist bodies, and so on, we have, instead of one hundred and forty-three, only forty-two titles.

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In other words, if there could be a consolidation of each denominational group, the reproach of our division would be largely taken away."

This family reunion is proceeding hopefully, as, for instance, in the return of the Cumberland Presbyterians to the northern Presbyterian body, the overtures between northern and southern Presbyterians, northern and southern Methodists, northern Methodists and Methodist Protestants, Baptists and Free Baptists. Similar action is in place between Congregationalists, Baptists, Disciples and others.

Within these families or groups what divisive forces still hold Christians apart? Dr. Carroll classifies the historic causes of division under four heads.

1. "Controversies over doctrine;"
2. "Controversies over administration or discipline;"
3. "Controversies over moral questions;"
4. "Controversies of a personal character."

Almost all of these have disappeared like the slavery question. Two or three more general forces, likely to hinder union at any time, may be mentioned.

The first includes many standing disagreements, most of them upon non-essentials, some quite trivial; some in doctrine, some in administration, some not strictly in either field. Thus far the convictions of Baptists, and probably Disciples also, upon

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immersion form toward us such a barrier. Our doctrinal disagreements upon the person of Christ hold Unitarians and Congregationalists apart; this is not a minor disagreement, but its action is within polity and family precincts. The bishopric was one of the issues which created the Methodist Protestant body; it might still hinder their happy return to the parent church.

A second seriously divisive force is the bunch of things called historic associations. Every **Historic Associations** branch of the Church makes history and loves it. To merge with others seems disloyal to the fathers. Denominational patriotism is exceeding strong in some quarters. It might be hard for some lineal Baptists to lie close with the children of those who stoned the prophets out of Massachusetts into Rhode Island. And the "Wee Frees," both in Scotland and among Cumberland Presbyterians, are showing the stubbornness of tradition and the historic conscience, and are continuing to make fiercely separative history. Mason and Dixon's line has been almost a wall of fire between sections of churches which broke apart on that awful issue. Such surcharged memories yield slowly to the grace of God. We have fathers and brethren among ourselves who shook mournful heads over the proposed surrender of our Congregational name in the negotiations with United Brethren and Methodist Protestants. As to this name of ours, no minister who could get day's

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wages for the time spent in uttering it would ever need a donation party or fall upon the tender mercies of relief funds. But it does have flocks of beautiful creatures lodging in the branches thereof. These three hundred years of ours are wonderful; can any other loyal children think to match them? No one should be so disloyal as to be inconsiderate of others' attachments.

There remains the divisive power of temperament. After all light and heavy humor about it, temperament is a deep-running reality. <sup>ment</sup> Tempera-  
In church union discussions we use it in  
an ample sense. Good people differ in personal qualities, disposition, character, culture, manners, home life, social ways. It is not well to think, and it is worse to say, that some are better than others. For purposes of church dissension men may be better or worse; for purposes of church union they are merely dissimilar. Such differences characterize neighborhoods, groups, organized bodies, districts, denominations. Some people and groups are mutually congenial; others, though respecting one another, lack affinities. It was freely said that we Congregationalists would not most naturally have sought United Brethren and Methodist Protestants, nor they us. They both belong rather in the Methodist group. Many opposed the union on this score. We should find our own kind more numerous, it was thought, among Presbyterians; similar psychological elements and unities, similar grades of cultivation,

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similar historic extractions and developments, similar social manners and customs and resources. It seems to many that we have drifted farther from Baptists and others in our administrative group than from the Presbyterian family.

Such divisive forces I desired to introduce into our line of thought, but not to discuss with any **Brotherhood** fulness. What shall we think of **Mightier** them with respect to the duty of church union? It seems clear to me that they should not be permitted to block any actual attempt whatever at union. Among all Christian communions on earth the uniting power of brotherhood ought to be mightier than all combinations of divisive forces. It is not so yet; and who will cast the first stone? My conviction is this, that, when any two Christian bodies have been moved of God toward compounding their differences, have met, have found themselves hopefully near to union on the graver issues of doctrine and property and polity, it is grief and shame to suffer the union to fail on these minor counts. The scandal of disunion, the beauty of union, the primacy of love, the word of the Master, each and all are too sovereign and august to be overborne by personal pettiness. Temperament? "One is your Master, and all ye are brethren." Our Church, with its glorious history and matchless name? "God so loved the world." Our preferences? "Hereby know we love, because he laid down

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his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." The duty of church union is red, blood-red.

The union of churches is chiefly a means toward the reunion of Christendom. But what really is this greater end? It is said that, if we could once get together in one all-inclusive organization, we should inevitably break up again; the bulk would be too enormous and clumsy to move. The reply is that then we might properly divide. We should have established the primacy of union in the conscience of the Christian world. We should have bowed together under the scepter of love. The trouble is not that United Brethren, Methodist Protestants and Congregationalists are living and working in three separate organizations; the trouble is that they have declined to unite. That, not actual working divisions, is the scandal of Christendom. We could justify church divisions made upon convenience, temperamental affiliations, or preference for certain forms of worship or administration, provided that the separate bodies never preyed upon one another, always cooperated, in honor preferred one another, and sprang together with a loyal shout wherever essential unity was seriously questioned. The profound issue of unity once made supreme in the heart of the Christian world and sovereign in its practise, agreeable and practical measures of diversity promote health and

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efficiency. The second great commandment does not forbid us to select our church relations, along with our social associations, among our affinities and conveniences. Ideas rule, not forms and physical arrangements. The question is not, Are the churches of Christ divided into separate administrative bodies? not, How many separate bodies? but, What does it mean? Why do they remain apart? Why do they permit the wrongs and woes of division to flourish? So long as the answer is that they are not willing to unite, that they prefer to tolerate the wrongs and woes, that they even prefer to flourish themselves upon those wrongs and woes, so long must the duty of church union stand paramount. Not until the answer may be that the evils of division are at an end, that the churches are heartily ready to unite, that existing divisions express quite minor choices of practical convenience and personal preference, that all such choices are held subject to constraints of fellowship, — not until essential unity has thus embodied its victory all round the world, can church union halt or falter.

But in order to compass such unity how far must church union be carried? Who knows?

**Limits of Church Union** Not, I believe, so far as to a single all-embracing organization; perhaps not so far as that in any Christian country. But just so far, though it be unto a single organization and the ends of the earth, as may be necessary to unite the whole Christian world in un-



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doubted and unfailing brotherhood. The organic union of Christian denominations must be fostered. Cooperation is not sufficient. Federation is not sufficient. The best Christian conscience condemns the one hundred and forty-three denominations and their attempted vindications. The future must decide where a halt in the union movement may be made.













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