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# CONGREGATIONAL CREEDS

AND

# COVENANTS

BY

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## PREFACE

There exists one monumental work on "The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism" by Prof. Williston Walker. To that work and the books listed in its Bibliography as well as to some later books, the author of the present work is deeply indebted. There is need, however, of an inexpensive and popular book setting forth our general position as a denomination with reference to creedal statements, and containing the texts of those confessions of faith which have received from time to time the endorsement of Congregationalists, particularly in America. The student who wishes to make an exhaustive study of the subject will still need Prof. Walker's great book; but both ministers and laymen need a smaller work, such as this undertakes to be. Dr. Walker's book appeared in 1893, and completed its admirable recital with the adoption of the Commission's creed of 1883. A whole generation has passed since then, and there are important supplements to be added to the history.

Dr. Walker's great book deals with Congregational Creeds and Platforms. The present work contains no study of platforms or systems of government, that subject having been treated in the author's "The Law of Congregational Usage" and in his "Congregational Manual;" but the present volume is concerned with Congregational covenants, as well as with its creeds.

This book had been written and was thought to be ready for the press when the author discovered an entirely unexpected fund of information on the subject of church covenants in "The Church Covenant Idea" by Champlin Burrage, published in 1904 by the American Baptist Publication Society. The author was familiar with Mr. Burrage's other contributions to the literature of the early Anabaptists, Pilgrims and Puritans, but singularly had never heard of this important monograph. Since obtaining it, however, he has considerably enlarged the section devoted to "Church Covenants," availing himself freely of the material collected by Mr. Burrage.

In addition to these, and the standard books on Congregational history and polity, the author is indebted to Schaff's Creeds of

Christendom, three volumes; to *The History of Creeds and Confessions*, by Prof. W. A. Curtis, of Aberdeen; and to Prof. Briggs' suggestive volume on *Theological Symbolics*. The quotations from various authorities on the ethics of creed subscription are acknowledged in their proper places in the text. But the author's largest debt is to several hundred ministers and other scholars who, at the author's request, have sent to him copies of confessions and covenants from every part of the United States and from other countries, together with statements as to local usage with reference to their employment in worship and confession.

It is the purpose of this book, not only to bring down to date the story of our Congregational covenants and confessions of faith, but to put into the hands of our ministers and laymen what the author hopes will be a helpful treatise on the rightful place of creeds and their possible use and abuse in Congregational churches.

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# PART ONE

## CONGREGATIONAL COVENANTS

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### I. THE CREED AND THE COVENANT

A Congregational church is not necessarily a church of Congregationalists; it is a church of Christians, Congregationally governed. The earliest Congregational churches possessed no formal confessions of faith. The church in Wenham, Massachusetts, had a confession as early as 1644, and that of Winthrop, Connecticut, adopted one in 1647, but the general habit of including a creed in the constitution of a Congregational church originated in the early part of the nineteenth century, when the Unitarian controversy sharply defined, and in some instances over-emphasized, the lines of Christian dogma, dividing the adherents of that communion from their brethren in the historic Congregational churches.

The absence of formal confessions of faith was not in anywise due to carelessness on the part of the early Congregationalists as to what their members should believe. Examinations for admission to the church were often somewhat rigid, though ordinarily were made flexible, and adjusted to the age, experience and condition of persons uniting with the church. Candidates for church fellowship sometimes were examined before the whole church membership, though more frequently examinations were held in private. We are reliably informed by Captain Johnson in his "Wonder-Working Providence" that examinations were less severe, not only in the case of

young people and of women, but also of men who were bashful and not accustomed to speaking in public. The Cambridge Platform definitely declared that severity of examination was to be avoided, and that "the weakest measure of faith is to be accepted." Doubtless the examinations would have seemed severe if compared to the methods in vogue at the present day, but we are not left in doubt as to their theory and intention.

Church membership in primitive Congregationalism was based not on the acceptance of a formal creed, but on assent to a covenant. Some of the covenants contained brief summaries of doctrine, but even this was exceptional. The Scrooby church was organized on the basis of a covenant of its members "to walk together in the ways of the Lord, made known or to be made known to them, whatever it should cost them, the Lord assisting them." The church at Salem was organized with thirty members, each one of whom was presented with a written copy of the Covenant, penned by the pastor, Rev. Francis Higginson, as follows:

"We covenant with the Lord and one with another, and do bind ourselves, in the presence of God, to walk together in all His ways, according as He is pleased to reveal himself unto us in his blessed Word of Truth."

The church in Charlestown, which became the First church in Boston, was organized on the basis of the covenant of its members "to walk in all our ways according to the rule of the Gospel, and in all sincere conformity to his holy ordinances, and in mutual love and respect each to the other, so near as God shall give us grace."

The Church in New Haven was organized on the basis of a similar covenant, and the same is true of the Congregational churches of New England generally.

Prof. Walker says, "In general, these fundamental covenants were remarkably free from doctrinal expression, being usually a simple promise to walk in fidelity to the Divine commandment and in Christian faithfulness one to another.

Nor was anything of peculiar sanctity supposed to lie in the form of words adopted at the beginning. Such covenants were renewed, made more explicit against definite forms of prevalent sin, or otherwise amended, with much freedom, to meet the exigencies of ecclesiastical life. In fact, it was widely the custom for each new minister to draught the particular agreement to which he took the assent of candidates for church membership, without necessarily submitting his form of words to the approval of the church. The essential matter was the agreement, not its verbal expression." (Walker's "Congregationalists," p. 218.)

One of the most elaborate of these early covenants was that of the church at Woburn, adopted in 1642, and reported by Captain Johnson in his "Wonder-Working Providence," which he accompanies with the statement "Every church hath not the same for words, for they are not for a form of words." The following is the Woburn covenant:

We that do assemble ourselves this day before God and his people, in an unfeigned desire to be accepted of Him as a Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the rule of the New Testament, do acknowledge ourselves to be the most unworthy of all others that we should attain such a high grace, and the most unable of ourselves to the performance of any thing that is good, abhorring ourselves for all our former defilements in the worship of God, and other ways, and relying only upon the Lord Jesus Christ for atonement, and upon the power of his grace for the guidance of our whole after course, do here in the name of Christ Jesus, as in the presence of the Lord, from the bottom of our hearts agree together through his grace to give up our selves, first unto the Lord Jesus as our only King, Priest and Prophet, wholly to be subject unto him in all things, and therewith one unto another, as in a Church-Body to walk together in all the Ordinances of the Gospel, and in all such mutual love and offices thereof, as toward one another in the Lord; and all this, both according to the present light that the Lord hath given us, as also according to all further light, which He shall be pleased at any time to reach out unto us out of the Word by the Goodness of his grace, renouncing also in the same Covenant all errors and Schisms, and whatsoever byways that are contrary to the blessed rules revealed in the Gospel, and in particular the inordinate love and seeking after the things of the world.—Johnson's "Wonder-Working Providence," p. 216.

Not till 1826, when Nathaniel Emmons published his "Scriptural Platform of Ecclesiastical Government" did any considerable group of Congregational churches found their organization on a theory that the local church is a voluntary club, which may rightfully adopt sectarian creeds, expressive of the faith of its members as separate from that of Christians in general, and designed for the purpose of keeping other Christians out. Dr. Leonard Woolsey Bacon subjects this departure from historic Congregationalism to merciless and just criticism, maintaining that it was nothing less than a secession from historic Congregationalism on the part of certain orthodox churches in Eastern Massachusetts. He said, "Not only did the use of imposed and prescribed doctrinal tests (so abhorrent to the fathers) come into general use; but the new churches were distinctly labelled 'Trinitarian' or 'Calvinistic;' and it came to be considered quite laudable, by stipulations in the covenant, to elect churches on an anti-slavery, or total abstinence, or prohibitionist basis."—"The Congregationalists," pp. 224, 5.

In the beginning it was not so. Richard Mather says that churches "may have a platform by way of a profession of their faith, but not a binding rule of faith and practice." Burton in his rejoinder to Prynne says: "It is the greatest possible tyranny over men's souls to make other men's judgments the rule of my conscience." Cotton Mather says, "The churches of New England make only vital piety the terms of communion among them; and they all with delight, see godly Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Anti-pedo Baptists, and Lutherans, all members of the same churches." To this agree the early fathers in practical unanimous testimony.

It is safe to say that if Congregationalism had continued to be the only church in New England, and from thence had spread westward into communities where it should have had no need to differentiate itself from other denominations, very

few Congregational churches would ever have adopted formal confessions of faith. They would have remained content with covenants of exceeding brevity, elasticity and simplicity, and would have referred for the expression of their faith in creedal form to almost any convenient and well known declaration of faith "for the substance thereof."

When local pastors prepared confessions of faith for their own use, they were rarely adopted by the church, but were used as convenient summaries of expression to be submitted to prospective members in order to assist them in the formulation of their own views and not as creedal tests on the basis of whose acceptance or denial Christians were to be admitted or excluded.

The Unitarian controversy greatly modified the historic relationship of Congregationalism to creedal statements, and the spread of the Congregational denomination outside of New England into communities where it came into direct relations with other and more highly organized churches made it inadvisable longer to refer to the confessions of 1648 and 1680 as adequately or even vaguely representing the faith of modern Congregationalism. Creedal forms became a practical working necessity, but that fact in no way commits the denomination to the policy of creedal tests. Creeds in Congregationalism are definitely used as a testimony and not as a test.

The relations of an individual church member to the declaration of faith either of a local church or of his denomination are not unlike those of a voter to his party platform. The platform does not in any wise undertake to tell what every member of the party thinks on every possible question at issue before the American people. It does endeavor to set forth the general attitude of the party as a whole toward the more prominent of those questions, leaving the individual voter very wide latitude of judgment with reference to particular questions, even including those which are treated in the platform. In like manner it is the theory of the Congregational churches,

and was so in the beginning, that a Congregational church should be inclusive of all true Christian men and women and children in the community. Cotton Mather expressed with pride the favor with which the New England churches regarded their "variety in unity."

A confession of faith may be a very useful or a very harmful thing. In the main, our Congregational churches have stood in wholesome fear of creedal forms. Almost any Congregational church would prefer to have no creed rather than a creed to use as a test of fellowship, or a creed that could not be changed. The only notable exceptions to this general rule of Congregational practice are those which grew out of the Unitarian controversy in the nineteenth century.

The Congregational churches have always sought to be obedient to the rule of God and of the whole body of the people, but have earnestly objected to the spiritual tyranny of men, either living or dead, imposed upon them by any kind of ecclesiastical authority. Whatever consent Congregationalists give to confessions of faith, either local or general, must be in essential accord with, and definitely limited by, these distinctive historical principles.

It is hardly too much to say of the earlier Congregational confessions that their doctrinal portions were little more than footnotes to their declarations of polity. New England Congregationalists were not experienced creed-makers, but they had much practice in defining their principles of church government. They considered doctrine to be of more consequence than discipline, but they never regarded their Christian faith as essentially different from that of the great body of Christians in the Reformed churches, while they did regard their form of government as their distinctive heritage and an important part of their legacy to the world. They very readily accepted, one after the other, the Westminster and Savoy Confessions, rather than be bothered with making creeds of their own.

The Savoy Confession was practically identical with the Westminster standards, excepting as to church government. These two symbols were readily accepted for substance of doctrine in New England, partly because Congregationalists for the most part were Calvinists and essentially like-minded with Presbyterians, and with English Congregationalists, but none the less because they were ready to assent in general terms to almost any orthodox creed. Having thus easily disposed of the question of doctrine, they proceeded to argue about polity. The eighth article of the "Heads of Agreement," established in England in 1692, and adopted at Saybrook, in 1708, says:

As to what appertains to the soundness of judgment in matters of faith, we esteem it sufficient that a church acknowledge the Scriptures to be the Word of God, the perfect and only rule of faith and practice, and own either the doctrinal part of those commonly called Articles of the Church of England, or the Confession or Catechisms, shorter or longer, compiled by the assembly at Westminster, or the confession agreed on at the Savoy, to be agreeable to the said rule.

The Westminster or Savoy Confessions, or that of the Church of England, any one of them would answer for substance of doctrine.

They affirmed all creeds with a certain latitude, declaring as in the preface to the Saybrook Confession:

It was the Glory of our fathers, that they heartily professed the only Rule of their Religion from the very first to be the Holy Scriptures, according whereunto, so far as they were persuaded, that intelligent Inquiry, Solicitous search, and faithful Prayer conformed was for Faith, their Worship together with the whole Administration of the House of Christ, and their manners, allowance being given to human Failures and Imperfections.

But they were averse to forcing their confessions on others or having other confessions forced upon themselves.

In the preface to the Savoy declaration it is declared that a Confession is—

To be looked upon as a meet or fit medium, or means, whereby to express that their common faith and salvation, and no way to

be made use of as an imposition upon any. Whatever is of force or constrained in matters of this nature causeth them to degenerate from the name and nature of Confessions and turns them from being Confessions of Faith, into exactions and impositions of faith.

Congregationalists have many creeds, but no creed. There is a sense in which they accept the substance of all creeds; but they have uniformly refused to accept the authority of any creed. Any Congregational Church is at liberty to accept any creed it chooses, keep it as long as it likes, modify it when it is convinced of a larger truth, and discard it when it is ready. There is no central or superior body which can impose a creed on a Congregational church, neither is there any body which can forbid a Congregational Church to employ a creed if it chooses. Thomas Welde, first pastor of the Church in Roxbury, stated in 1644 what is recognized as the essential attitude of Congregational churches:

“We hold it not unlawful to have a platform; yet we see no ground to impose such a platform on churches, but leave them their liberty therein.” When Rathband, to whose criticisms Welde replied, expressed wonder at the uniformity of organization and faith of Congregational churches, and “how the New England Churches fell into so exact a discipline without a platform,” Welde replied that they had, indeed, a platform, the best and most consistent on earth, the Holy Scriptures. The Boston Confession of 1680 held that,

God alone is Lord of the Conscience, and hath left it free from all the doctrines and commandments of men which are in any wise contrary to his word or not contained in it: so that to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commands is to betray true liberty of conscience; and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also.

On the whole, Congregationalists find it a convenience to have written creeds. Churches that have no such written confessions have to spend a great deal more time in expositions of their unwritten creeds. If a Congregationalist is asked,

“What, in general, do Congregationalists believe?” he will answer, “There is no man or ecclesiastical body that has any right to put the Congregational denomination on record in answer to that question; but broadly speaking, Congregationalists hold the evangelical faith common to Christian Churches, and have from time to time expressed that faith in confessions that they use as a testimony and not as a test.”

The brief confession of faith which was adopted as a part of the Constitution of the National Council is prefaced by a recognition of the “steadfast allegiance of the Churches composing this Council to the faith which our fathers confessed, which from age to age has found its expression in the historic creeds of the Church universal and of this communion.” It deliberately avoids confessing faith in those creeds, but accepts the faith which, imperfectly and progressively, was expressed in them all. It then adds a brief and comprehensive confession, which, in a broad and general sense, may be said to contain the statement of faith in those doctrines which Congregationalists in general count of especial importance, and which they assume as the basis of their fellowship in their National Council.

Since the adoption of the new constitution of the National Council with its brief declaration of faith, many churches have been revising their form of admission of members, and there has been increased discussion as to the place of creeds and confessions of faith in Congregational polity.

## II. THE COVENANT IDEA

How did any church come to be organized on the basis of a covenant? The answer is full of interest, and of large importance to the student of Congregational history. Before the Reformation there had been a church which assumed its right to exist in view of the alleged succession of its bishops from the apostles, the Bishop of Rome holding the keys by right of his assumed tactical and spiritual descent from Peter. Following the Reformation, state-churches prevailed, holding their title either by will of the civil authority, or of some relation between it and the spiritual lordship of the land. Into such churches men were born; no covenant was necessary to establish their membership, though baptism and confirmation involved a recognition of the individual's relation to the system. What caused any group of men to believe, as the fathers of the Congregational and Baptist churches certainly did believe, in church membership as established in a personal and mutual covenant? When these men revolted, as they did revolt, against the idea of membership in the church as established by civil authority and including certain masses of men and women by the accident of birth, how did it occur that these founders of new churches, did not affirm, as very naturally they might have done, that the basis of church membership was assent to a creed?

This question has received altogether inadequate attention among Congregational scholars. We are indebted to Mr. Champlin Burrage for the largest collection of data bearing upon this question. In his little book, "The Covenant Idea," published by American Baptist Publication Society in 1904, is a collection of material gathered from the libraries of Lon-

don, Oxford and Cambridge, which is freely drawn upon in the following pages.

The first suggestion of a church covenant came to the Congregational and Anabaptist fathers from the study of the Old Testament. Far back as the story of the flood is the idea, and the use of the word as establishing a relationship between God and man. God said to Noah before the coming of the flood "I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee." (Gen. 6: 18). After the flood this promise is recorded, "And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of the flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth." (Gen. 9: 11-13).

In even more intimate fashion the covenant of Abraham suggested God's relationship to the individual soul and to a people established in a perpetual relationship with their God. Abraham was perhaps the first human being who consciously chose his God, and made a religion other than that in which he had been born his own by a solemn covenant with Jehovah. The people of Israel claimed Jehovah as their God, not only because of his tribal relationship to their nation and its land, but because of Jehovah's covenant with the patriarchs renewed in solemn assemblies in later generations.

Had the early Puritans known the customs of Oriental lands as they have been studied by modern scholars, and could they have possessed such material as Dr. H. Clay Trumbull assembled in his two painstaking volumes, "The Blood Covenant" and "The Threshold Covenant" they would have known how widespread among the ancient peoples, even before

the time of Abraham, was the idea of a covenant between God and man.

These various Old Testament references abundantly justifies a high regard for a covenant relation between God and the human soul, and the idea received a further emphasis in the classic passages in Jeremiah, in one of which Judah is denounced for not keeping the covenant (Jer. 11: 1-8) and in the other of which there is the promise, quoted and amplified in the Epistle to the Hebrews, of a New Covenant (Jer. 31: 31-34; Hebrews 8: 8-13). These references are commemorated in the very names by which we call the two divisions of books of the Bible, The Old Covenant, and the New Covenant.

The Jews, who counted themselves the covenant people, may at times have lost the sense of an individual relationship in that of the clan or tribe or nation, but when they admitted Gentiles into their fellowship, they recognized the individuality of the covenant idea; for their proselytes became so by a covenant. This custom, known to the early Christians, had its influence in the establishment of their covenants.

The founders of the Congregational and Baptist churches were not students of comparative religion; but they were students of the Old Testament, and they believed that the covenant of God with the Patriarchs was a valid precedent for a covenant relation with his people and their children to **all** generations.

But while the early Puritans were students of the Old Testament they derived their polity almost wholly from the New Testament, and while they did not find in the New Testament the same emphasis upon the word covenant which is so prominent in the Old, the lack of the word in no wise daunted them, and they believed they found the essential idea in New Testament polity. In this they probably were right; and there are clear indications of the employment of a covenant in the usage of the early church. On this Burrage says—

“Yet though the church covenant idea, as it is known to us, does not seem definitely to appear in the New Testament, and though the term covenant employed in relation to a Christian church is evidently of comparatively late date, it is interesting to note that in Asia Minor, very early in the Christian era, namely, during the reign of the Emperor Trajan (A. D. 98-117), there were Christians who seem to have made use of an idea practically equivalent to, though earlier and therefore naturally more informal than, the church covenant idea of later times. This fact is clearly manifested in the well-known letter of Pliny the Younger to the Emperor Trajan (written about the year A. D. 112), in which he says “that they [the Christians of that time in Pliny’s domain] bound themselves by an oath at their meetings not to be guilty of theft, or robbery, or adultery, or the violation of their word or pledge.” This oath resembles the earliest church covenants of later times, though, of course, the term covenant was not used.

“It seems highly probable that other examples of early church oaths are to be found in the remaining literature of the period contained either in the reported confessions of Christians or in the early Christian writings. As to the origin of these church oaths, there is, it would seem, a reasonable explanation. It is a well-known fact that of the two classes of Jewish proselytes the “Proselytes of the Gate” “bound themselves to avoid . . . blasphemy, idolatry, murder, uncleanness, theft, disobedience toward the authorities, and the eating of flesh with its blood.” It was evidently a regular requirement imposed by the Jews that these Gentile Proselytes of the Gate should make such an oath. Likewise when the Jews became Christians and formed a Jewish Christian church, as in Jerusalem, they seem to have retained this custom, and to have required of the Gentile Christians in Antioch, as recorded in Acts 15: 19, 20, and repeated in slightly different phraseology in ver. 29 of the same chapter, “that

they abstain from the pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from what is strangled, and from blood." When Gentile or chiefly Gentile churches later began to be formed it is not surprising to find, therefore, especially in Asia Minor where Jewish influence was very strongly felt, that the church oath is recorded as being a custom within the church of Jesus Christ itself. How widely the use of the church oath spread among the early churches is probably as yet hidden in the records of antiquity still remaining. We know already, however, the origin of the church oath, and the time and conditions of its origin, as given in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles."—*Burrage: The Covenant Idea*, pp. 11, 12.

In the ages before the Reformation the covenant idea practically disappeared from the teaching of the church, but with the Reformation it reappeared, and first apparently in the teaching of the Anabaptists. Mr. Burrage believes that the idea of a covenant can be found in the literature which immediately preceded the Reformation.

In the year 1523, in a book written by Hans Locher, entitled "*Ein tzeitlang geschwigner christlicher Bruder*," occurs the following: "If indeed, we have borne in us the likeness of the Father since the creation and if indeed we have given ourselves over to faith and service and have praised and sworn in baptism, after we received the garment of blamelessness, to work for the Lord's profit, to avoid evil and to do good; therefrom will follow our duty to obey his will with all possible industry." This was written unmistakably by an Anabaptist, as baptism is spoken of so prominently; but this brotherhood evidently had had an existence for some time, at least, before the Reformation began, and apparently had become Anabaptist as the Reformation progressed, for the writer refers to his memory of the long history of his Society (*alten Geschichte seiner Gemeinschaft*).

Of the foregoing Burrage says: "In the above without doubt are the elements of the church covenant idea, the mem-

bers of the brotherhood giving themselves over to faith and service, and swearing, or promising, to work for the Lord's profit, to avoid evil, and to do good. Whether such a covenant was employed in this brotherhood before it became Anabaptist in belief, or in others that went through a like experience, is an open question.

“The church covenant idea seems to have been of slow and uncertain evolution, and our knowledge of it in these earliest times is but meagre on account of the scarcity of printed records. Yet from 1523 to the present time one comes in history again and again upon this idea, sometimes more; sometimes less, clearly expressed.”—The Covenant Idea, pp. 13, 14.

### III. THE SCOTCH COVENANTS

The covenant idea received a new, and so far as we know, as entirely independent emphasis in the development of the Reformation in Scotland. We do not know from what source the Scotch people obtained the idea, but the rise of the Covenanters in the middle of the sixteenth century determined the destiny of Scotland.

In speaking of the early Scotch covenants, James Kerr, D. D., says that the people of Scotland "were led to bind themselves together in 'bands,' or covenants, and together to God, in prosecution of their aims. At Dun, in 1556, they entered into a 'Band' in which they vowed to 'refuse all society with idolatry.' At Edinburgh, in 1557, they entered into 'ane Godlie Band,' vowing that 'we, by his grace, shall, with all diligence, continually apply our whole power, substance, and our lives to maintain, set forward, and establish the most blessed word of God.' At Perth, in 1559, they entered into covenant 'to put away all things that dishonor his name that God may be truly and purely worshiped.' At Edinburgh, in 1560, they entered into covenant 'to procure, by all means possible, that the truth of God's word may have free passage within this realm.' And these covenants were soon followed by the Confession of Faith prepared by Knox and five other reformers, and acknowledged by the three Estates as 'wholesome and sound doctrine grounded upon the infallible truth of God.'"—The Covenants and the Covenanters, pp. 12, 13.

Fortunately the text of all the important Scotch Covenants has been preserved. The one signed in the winter of 1557 by the early reformers, known as the First Covenant, reads as follows:

We, perceiving how Satan, in his members, the Antichrists of our time, cruelly doth rage, seeking to overthrow and to destroy the evangel of Christ and His Congregation, ought, according to our bounden duty, to strive in our Master's cause even unto the death, being certain of the victory in Him. The which our duty being well considered, we do promise, before the majesty of God and His Congregation, that we (by his grace) shall with all diligence continually apply our whole power, substance, and our very lives, to maintain, set forward, and establish the most blessed Word of God and His Congregation; and shall labour at our possibility to have faithful ministers purely and truly to minister Christ's evangel and sacraments to His people. We shall maintain them, nourish them, and defend them, the whole Congregation of Christ, and every member thereof, at our whole powers and wearing of our lives, against Satan, and all wicked power that does intend tyranny or trouble against the foresaid Congregation. Unto the which Holy Word and Congregation we do join us, and also do forsake and renounce the congregation of Satan, with all the superstitious abomination and idolatry thereof; and, moreover, shall declare ourselves manifestly enemies thereto, by this our faithful promise before God, testified to His Congregation, by our subscriptions at these presents. At Edinburgh, the 3d day of December 1557 years.—Text from "The History of Scotland." By John Mill Burton.

"A great advance was reached," says Doctor Kerr, "by the National Covenant of 1580. This National Covenant, or Second Confession of Faith was prepared by John Craig. . . Its original title was 'Ane Short and Generall Confession of the True Christiane Faith and Religione, according to God's verde and Actis of our Perlamentis, subscrybed by the Kingis Majestie and his Household, with sindrie otheris, to the glorie of God and good example of all men, att Edinburghe, the 28 day of Januare, 1580, and 14 yeare of his Majestie's reigne.' "

This covenant was subscribed again in 1590 and 1596, and was renewed February 28, 1638, and "was transcribed into hundreds of copies, carried throughout the country from north to south and east to west, and subscribed everywhere." The National Covenant, as finally renewed, is a long document, containing two additions to the original covenant, one summarizing the Acts of Parliament, the other consisting of special religious articles for the time. ("The Covenants and the Covenanters." By James Kerr, D. D., Edinburgh, 1895,

p. 13). The following quotations will furnish some idea of the nature of this covenant:

We all and every one of us under-written, protest, That, after long and due examination of our own consciences in matters of true and false religion, we are now thoroughly resolved in the truth by the Spirit and Word of God: and therefore we believe with our hearts, confess with our mouths, subscribe with our hands, and constantly affirm, before God and the whole world, that this only is the true Christian faith and religion, pleasing God, and bringing salvation to man, which now is, by the mercy of God, revealed to the world by the preaching of the blessed evangel; and is received, believed, and defended by many and sundry notable kirks and realms, but chiefly by the Kirk of Scotland, the King's Majesty, and three estates of this realm, as God's eternal truth, and only ground of our salvation. . .

We Noblemen, Barons, Gentlemen, Burgesses, Ministers and Commons under-written, . . . do hereby profess, and before God, His angels, and the world, solemnly declare, That with our whole hearts we agree, and resolve all the days of our life constantly to adhere unto and to defend the aforesaid true religion, and (forbearing the practice of all novations. . .) to labour, by all means, to recover the purity and liberty of the Gospel, as it was established and professed before the foresaid novations. . . And therefore, from the knowledge and conscience of our duty to God, to our King and country, without any worldly respect or inducement, so far as human infirmity will suffer, wishing a further measure of the grace of God for this effect; we promise and swear, by the great name of the Lord our God, to continue in the profession and obedience of the aforesaid religion. . .

And because we cannot look for a blessing from God upon our proceedings, except with our profession and subscription we join such a life and conversation as beseemeth Christians who have renewed their covenant with God; we therefore faithfully promise for ourselves, our followers, and all others under us, both in public, and in our particular families, and personal carriage, to endeavour to keep ourselves within the bounds of Christian liberty, and to be good examples to others of all godliness, soberness, and righteousness, and of every duty we owe to God and man.

And that this our union and conjunction may be observed without violation, we call the Living God, the Searcher of our Hearts, to witness, who knoweth this to be our sincere desire and unfeigned resolution, as we shall answer to Jesus Christ in the great day, and under pain of God's everlasting wrath, and of infamy and loss of all honour and respect in this world: most humbly beseeching the Lord to strengthen us by his Holy Spirit for this end, and to bless our desires and proceedings with a happy success; that religion and righteousness may flourish in the land, to the glory of God, the honour of our King, and peace and comfort of us all. In witness whereof, we have subscribed with our hands all the premises.

The last and most important covenant made in Scotland is that called the "Solemn League and Covenant" of 1643. One of the original copies of this is in the Manuscript Department of the British Museum. It is written on a roll of parchment several feet long, and about eight inches wide. In this document there are six articles, and a seventh, or conclusion.

The long closing section is as follows:

And because theis Kingdomes are guilty of many sinnes and proucacons against God and his sonne Jesus Christ, as is too manifest by our present distresses and dangers the fruts thereof wee professe and declare before God and the world our vnfained desire to bee humbled for our owne sines and for the sines of theis Kingdomes, especially that we haue not as wee ought, valued the inestimable Benefitt of the Gospel that wee haue not labored for the purity and power thereof and that wee haue not endeauoured to receiue Christ in our harts nor to walk worthy of him in our liues wch are the causes of other sines and transgressions soe much aboundinge amongst vs: And our true and vnfained purpose, desire, and endeauor for our selues, and all other vnder our power and charge both in publike and in priuate in all duties wee owe to God and man to amend our Liues and each one to goe before another in the example of A reall reformacon that the Lord may turne away his wrath & heaue indignacon & establish these Churches and Kingdomes in truth and peace. And this couenant wee make in the presence of Almyghty God the searcher of all harts wth a true intencon to reforme the same, as wee shall answer at the great day when the secrets of all harts shall be disclosed most humbly besseechinge the Lord to strengthen vs wth his holy Spirit for this end, & to blesse our desires & proceedings wth such successe as may be deliuerance and safety to his people & encouragement to other christian Churches groaninge vnder, or in danger of the yoke of Antichristian tyranny to Joyne in the same, or like assocacón and couenant to the glory of God the enlargment of the Kingdome of Jesus Christ and the peace and tranquillitie of Christian Kingdomes and common wealth.

[Dated Mar: 3. 1643.]

It is important to bear in mind that the Scotch covenants were not local church covenants, and in that important respect they differ from the covenants of the early Anabaptists and Congregationalists. They were signed by the inhabitants of cities or districts, and later they were endorsed by the people of the nation; the Solemn League and Covenant was even adopted by Parliament. But these covenants have an impor-

tant relation to the church life of Scotland. They involve the recognition of the sovereignty of the individual soul and his right to enter into covenant relations with his God. They were written and signed documents, and their extension in Scotland marks an advance in the evolution of the covenant, particularly as compared with the practice of the Anabaptists on the continent. It is on these covenants that the national Scottish Presbyterian Church is founded.

#### IV. EARLY ENGLISH COVENANTS

In his *History of Plymouth Plantations*, Governor Bradford mentions a certain Mr. Fytz as pastor of a Congregational Church in London before the days of Robert Browne. We are fortunate in being able to discover something about him, and even to be able to produce a short article from his pen. The article itself is very brief, but the story about it requires some space, and is well worth reading. For this little fragment from the pen of Richard Fytz may be the earliest covenant of an English Congregational church that has come down to us.

The history of covenants in Congregational Churches practically begins with Robert Browne, but modern Congregationalism had its beginnings before his day. The first of the Puritans was Bishop John Hooper, who was born in Somersetshire about 1495, only three years after the discovery of America. In the persecution under Mary Tudor he died for his faith, being burned at the stake. Next in succession was Thomas Cartwright, who was born in Hertfordshire in 1535, to whom, as Doctor Dexter has well said, "must be assigned the chiefest place in bringing Puritanism in England to the dignity of a developed system." Under his leadership, by tongue and pen, it gained many adherents among both clergy and laity. By 1752 both Presbyterianism and Independency were fairly well defined as two varying aspects of this movement, and both grew until the Act of 1593 which made refusal to attend the established church, or any attempt at persuading others not to attend, an offense punishable with fine and imprisonment. From that time on those who would worship God otherwise than according to the will of Queen

Elizabeth had the choice of silence, exile, or secret and dangerous meeting. All three of these courses were pursued by some of those who had been Puritans.

On June 19, 1567, the Plumbers' Hall in London was hired, ostensibly for the celebration of a wedding. The police, inspecting the names of parties interested, may have been of opinion that weddings had become rather frequent in that group; at any rate they resolved to be among those present. Probably there was a wedding; we cannot suspect the good people of deliberate falsehood in the matter; but if so, the wedding was not the only affair of interest that night. The police made a raid and discovered, what they anticipated, that the tenants of Plumbers' Hall were not engaged in the laudable occupation of drinking themselves drunk at a marriage celebration, but were holding a religious meeting. About a hundred persons were present, of whom twenty-four men and seven women were arrested. The next day these appeared before the Lord Mayor of London and the Bishop Grindal of London, who was a Puritan at heart. The record of that hearing is preserved. The demeanor of Grindal and of the Lord Mayor was not unduly severe, but they failed to shake the accused in their conviction that the Church of England was wrong in the matter of vestments and other "idolatrous practices."

In the report of the trial of the Plumbers' Hall company there is no evidence of a church organization, but that does not prove that no such organization existed; the charge against them did not concern organization, but the separate meeting or conventicle. In this trial one of the accused said, "So long as we might have the Word freely preached, and the Sacraments administered, without preferring of idolatrous gear above it, we never assembled together in houses." But there was an organization. In June, 1568, Bishop Grindal wrote to Bullinger concerning his discovery of a secret church, meeting sometimes in houses, sometimes in open fields, some-

times in ships, in which they have service and the sacraments. He says, "Besides this they have ordained ministers, elders and deacons after their own way, and have even excommunicated some who had seceded from their church. The number of this sect is about two hundred, but consisting of more women than men. The Privy Council have lately committed the heads of this faction to prison and are using every means to put a timely stop to this sect."

On April 22, 1569, twenty-four persons were discharged from the Bridewell, "besides seven women also prisoners," by order of "the right reverend father in God, Edmund, Bishop of London." This order was issued on the basis of a promise by William Bonam, preacher, to desist from holding private assemblies for worship, in which promise presumably these thirty other people joined.

The first Congregational church in England was virtually organized in jail. The form under which the Plumbers' Hall assembly was held may or may not have been a formal organization; but in the Bridewell, a prison on the banks of the Fleet River, where the trial of Catherine of Argon had been held, this band of imprisoned Congregationalists compacted their organization. They elected Richard Fytz pastor and a man named Bowland as deacon. They called in no bishop or presbytery; they did it by the right inherent in the congregation.

Where the old Fleet Prison stood stands now Memorial Hall, the Congregational headquarters of Great Britain.

Richard Fytz died in prison, or shortly after his release from prison, a martyr to his faith. We do not know much about him, but there are preserved three documents that give us at first hand the faith and polity of this church, and one of them is signed by the minister, and is doubtless (as both the others may be) the product of his pen.

The shortest of these three is printed in black letter on a single page, and was probably prepared in the first instance as a defense against certain slanders that were circulated con-

cerning this sect. But it appears to have had uses also as a kind of basis of organization, and it was printed in form suited to distribution in the congregation. There was another single sheet, printed in black letter, with nine solemn declarations of protest against the idolatry of the established church. Mr. Burrage regards the latter as a kind of covenant, and so for the purpose of protest it may have been. But our interest is not so much in this as in the more positive statement in the brief document called "The True Marks of Christ's Church." Two things only it insisted upon, the discipline, or fellowship, instead of canon law. We may regard it as the first platform of an organized church in modern Congregationalism.

The question has been asked whether this church, so constituted, was connected in any organic way with that of the Pilgrims. So far as we know it was not. But it was connected with the separated church in Amsterdam, and from it came the organization of the church of which Henry Jacob was minister, of whose covenant and order we have full knowledge; and from that came many churches, some of which exist to this day. The Pilgrims in Holland were in touch with this movement, though not greatly influenced by it. There was historical continuity throughout the entire reign of Elizabeth with the movements which had gone before from the beginnings of the English reformation, and with the movements which followed and still follow.

John Robinson affirmed that, as the result of persecution, "there was not one congregation separated in Queen Mary's time that remained in Queen Elizabeth's. The congregations were dissolved, and the persons in them bestowed themselves in their several parishes where their livings and estates were." (Justification, etc., Works, ii, 489.) It has become evident that Robinson was not strictly accurate in that statement. Perhaps he was a little too eager to disclaim any connection with Robert Browne, and wished to believe that the Pilgrim movement had grown up entirely distinct from the troubled

and sometimes turbulent organizations of earlier years. But it grows increasingly evident that the roots of Pilgrim history go deeper than John Robinson realized. Many facts are hopelessly lost to us, for meetings were held in secret, and there was no attempt to preserve evidence that might be used against them in court; but we are sure that congregations continued to meet in secret and that there was some continuity of organization.

### THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL COVENANT

By Richard Fytz

The Order of the Priuue Church in London, which by the malice of Satan is falsely slandered, and euill spoken of.

The myndes of them, that by the strengthe and workinge of the almighty, our Lorde Iesus Christ, haue set their hands and hartes, to the pure, vnmingled and sincere worshipinge of God, accordinge to his blessed and glorious worde in al things, onely abolishinge and abhorringe all tradicions and inuentions of man, whatsoever in the same Religion and Seruice of oure Lord God, knowinge this alwayes, that the Christe, eyther hathe or else euer more continually vnder the crosse striueth for to haue. Fyrste and formoste, the Glorious worde and Euangel preached, not in bondage and subjection, but freely, and purely, onleye and all together accordinge to the institution and good worde of the Lorde Iesus, without any tradition of man. And laste of all to haue, not the filthye Cannon Lawe, but dissipyne onleye, and all together to the heavenlye and almighty worde of our good Lorde, Isus Chryste.

(Signed) Richard Fytz, minister.

This was printed on one side of a small leaf. The separate and more elaborate covenant, similarly printed on another leaf, contained nine declarations of protest against the idolatry of the Church of England, ended with these solemn words:

God geue us sternghth styl to stryue in suffryng vnder the crosse, that the blessed worde of our God may onley rule and haue the highest place, to cast downe strong holdes, to destroy or overthrow policies cr imaginations, and euery high thyng that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and to bryng in to captiuitie or subjection, euery thought to the obedience of Christ, that the name and worde of the eternal our Lorde God may be axalted and magnified above all thynges.—Quoted in Burrage, *The Early English Dissenters*, ii 3-15.

Of the church that was used to meet in the Fleet Prison, Daniel Buek, scrivener, testified thus on March 9, 1593:

“Being asked what vowe or promise hee made when hee came first to their Societie, he answereth & sayth he made ye Protestation, viz: That hee would walke with ye rest of them so long as they did walke in ye way of ye Lorde, & as farr as might be warranted by ye word of God.”—Harleian Mss., 7042, p. 399; quoted by Dr. Dexter in his “True Story of John Smyth” p. 69.

The man to whom the modern Church is more indebted than to any other one man for the church covenant as we know it, is Robert Browne. To his leadership, not only his own age, but all coming ages, must pay tribute. He sets forth his ideas of the covenant in an epoch-making book, entitled, “A Booke WHICH SHEWETH THE *life and manners of all true Christians*, and howe vnlike they are vnto Turkes and Papistes and Heathen folke. By me, ROBERT BROWNE, Middlebvrgh, ¶ Imprinted by Richarde Painter. 1582.”

There are about ten short sections of this work, which it is essential for us here to examine. They are the following:

1. Wherefore are we called the people of God and Christians? Because that by a willing Couenaunt made with our God, we are vnder the gouernement of God and Christe, and thereby do leade a godly and christian life. Christians are a companie or number of beleeuers, which by a willing couenaunt made with their God, are vnder the gouernement of God and Christ, and keepe his Lawes in one holie communion: Because they are redeemed by Christe vnto holines & happines for euer, from whiche they were fallen by the sinne of Adam.

36. Howe must the churche be first planted and gathered vnder one kinde of gouernement?

First by a couenant and condicion, made on Gods behalfe.

Secondlie by a couenant and condicion made on our behalfe.

Thirdlie by vsing the sacrament of Baptisme to seale those condicions, and couenantes.

The couenant on God's behalf is his agreement or partaking of condicions with vs that if we keepe his lawes, not forsaking his gouernment, hee will take vs for his people, & blesse vs accordingly.

37. What is the couenant, or condicion on Gods behalfe? His promise to be our God and sauour, if we forsake not his gouernment by disobedience.

Also his promise to be the God of our seede, while we are his people. Also the gifte of his spirit to his children as an inwarde calling and furtheraunce of godlines.

His promise to his church, is his sure couenant, remembred, taught, and held by the church, and the seede thereof: whereby it onely hath assurance of saluation in Christ.

38. What is the couenant or condicion on our behalfe?

We must offer and geue vp our selues to be of the church and people of God.

We must likewise offer and geue vp our children and others, being vnder age, if they be of our households and we haue full power ouer them. We must make profession, that we are his people, by submitting our selues to his lawes and gouernement.

The couenaunt on our behalfe, is our agreement and partaking of conditions with God, That he shal be our God so long as wee keepe vnder his gouernement, and obey his lawes, and no longer.

39. How must Baptisme be vsed as a seale of this couenaunt?

They must be duellie presented, and offered to God and the church, which are to be Baptised.

They must be duellie received vnto grace and fellowship.

Baptisme is a Sacrament or marke of the outwarde church, sealing vnto vs by the wassing of our bodies in water, and the word accordingly preached, our suffering with Christ to die vnto sinne by repentance, and our rising with him to liue vnto righteousness, and also sealing our calling, profession, and happines gotten by our faith in our victorie of the same Iesus Christ.

Baptising into the bodie and gouernement of Christ, is when the parties Baptised are receyued vnto grace and fellowshippe, by partaking with the church in one Christian communion.

In this book of Browne's, we have a singularly complete and valid conception of the covenant as related both to the individual Christian and the local church. To Browne the covenant is with God and is also the basis of church membership.

Burrage raises the question whether Robert Browne is entirely or partly original in this work, or whether the ideas here expressed are in general borrowed from others who had preceded him, but more clearly thought out than hitherto had been the case?

He answers that Browne might, at least, have found the germ of his idea in a book entitled "THE HVMBEL and vn-famed confession of the belefe of certain poore banished men, grounded vpon the holy Scriptures of God, and vpon the Ar-

ticles of that vndefiled and only vndoubtedly true Christian faith, which the only Catholieke (that is to say vniuersal) Church of Christ professeth." At the end of the book are the words, "From Wittonburge by Nicholas Doreastor. Ann. M. D. liiii. [1554] the xiiii of May." From this the two following passages may be quoted:

This holy vniuersall church, as the sone in brightness, hath beames of light, whereof it cometh to passe, that there be also particuler Churches or congregations. Where though there be but two or three gathered together in y<sup>e</sup> name of Christe, He is in the myddes amonge them.

Almightye God (who euer was and is merciful) dyd promis him [man] againe euerlastyng lyfe, which was laied vp in his owne sonne: but so that (accordyng as he, euen God hymselfe by an euerlasting decree, had appointed) he wold be satisfyed, recompenced, and pacified againe, in the obedience of al his commaundementes, by the same nature of man: Whyche because of the corruption of sinne, that had entred in to it by disobedience, could not fully satisfye the law, and therefore God made an euerlasting couenaunt of mercye with mankinde, & promysed the blessed seede: namely, that hys owne son should put vpon him our nature, and therewith in innocency, satisfy the law, and bryng vs agayne into the fellowship of that euerlasting lyfe, whyche was lost thorow Adams disobediencie. . .

And what meane we els by thys, but euen to shew that it is an horrible thing, & farre out of order, that whyle the Lord in this his holy Sacramet [i.e., the Lord's Supper] offereth vs so large a couenaunt of mercye, we shal thincke scorne, to kepe the condicions thereof, and the rules that he hath prescribed vnto vs. No man doubtles (no not in Ciuile matters) would be so serued: wher like as it is no bargaine, till both parties be agreed, so cometh it to no perfect effecte, neither can it stand vnlesse the duties, codicions & promises be kept. Neuertheles this thing shal appeare muche more euidet, if we compare the practise of these present miserable dayes, to the order of the Lord and his Apostles in the primitiue church, & lay the one agaynst the other. As for the perourmauce of the condicions on hys party, ther is no doubt: For wher as he couenanteth with vs in thys holy Sacrament, so to feede, nourish, & comfort our consciences, that he wyl euen seale vs vnto his selfe, set hys marke vpo vs, and take vs for hys own. He certifieth vs assuredly, that vpon such condicions, as we also vpon our allegiaunce, are bound to kepe (whyche we must either do, or els become vnworthy Receauers to our damnatio) we haue fellowship with him, and are partakers of the same eternal lyfe, that he hym selfe hath purchased for vs in hys body and bloud.

It then appears, therefore, as Mr. Burrage points out, that more than twenty-five years before Robert Browne wrote "A

Booke WHICH SHEWETH" there had been printed in English one book, at least, which touched indirectly upon various views which he later brought out in that work. For instance, the idea of particular or congregational churches is hinted at, and though the method of organizing such churches by covenant is not distinctly given, yet the fundamental points from which the church covenant idea might have been developed are here clearly delineated. They are namely these: God has made a covenant of mercy with man on certain "condicions." This covenant is offered in the Lord's Supper. But there can be no bargain between God and men till both parties be agreed, and the covenant cannot stand "vnlesse the duties, condicions & promises be kept." In other words, though God has made this covenant from his side, yet it is no real covenant until men accept the "condicions" God has imposed, and so make a covenant on their own part, and thereby come into fellowship with God. In the sacrament of the Lord's Supper God seals men unto himself and sets his mark on them. The very thought that Browne especially emphasizes, namely, that a covenant has two aspects, a God-ward and a man-ward, and should be sealed in an outward manner, is all here. But Mr. Burrage also recognizes that there is much that Browne says which is not said by Dorchester, and there are also some points which he looks at in a different light. Where, then, did he obtain his views on the covenant? Were some borrowed, and the rest the product of his own thinking? We do not know: but for these ideas, in the form in which they have influenced the modern Church, we are indebted to Robert Browne.

Robert Browne's book "A Book which Sheweth" etc., from which the foregoing quotation is made, was published at Middleburg, Holland, in 1582: but Browne had already organized a church in Norwich, England at a date earlier than that of the publication of this book. This is shown by Robert Browne's work entitled "A Trve and Short Declaration, both of the Gathering and Ioyning together of Certaine Persons:

and also of the Lamentable Breach and Division which fell amongst them," of which probably the only known copy is in Lambeth Palace Library, London. In this book the organization of Browne's church in Norwich, in 1580-1, is described as follows:

This is to lay the foundation of Mat. 18 to preach and Bap- tize in the name of the Father teaching to obserue & doe, whatsoever saith Christ, I haue commanded you, & this is to overthrow the foundation to teach a toleration & practising of things, which are contraie to the whole gouernment & kingdom of Christ, &c.

### The Order Agreed On for the Gviding &

establishing of the companie in all Godlines, & such like This doctrine before being shewed to the companie, & openlie preached among them manie did agree thereto, & though much trouble and persecution did followe, yet some did cleaue fast to the trueth, but some Fell awaie fro when triall by pursutttes, losses & imprisonment came, & further increased then Robert, Barker, Nicholas Woe- dows, Tatsel, Bond & soe others, forsooke vs also & held back, and were afraied at the first. There was a day appointed & an order taken, for redresse off the former abuses & for cleauing to the Lord in greater obediece so a covenant was maed & ther mutual cosent was geue to hould to gether.

There were certaine chief pointes proued vnto them by the scriptures all which being particularie rehersed vnto them with exhortation they agreed vpon them, & pronouced their agreement to ech thing particularlie, saing, to this we geue our consent. **First therefore thei gaue their consent, to ioine themselues to the Lord, in one covenant & fellowship together, & to keep & seek agreement vnder his lawes & government: and therefore did vtterlie flee & auoide such like disorders & wickednes, as was mencioned before.** Further thei agreed off those which should teach them, and watch for the saluation of their soules, whom thei allowed & did chose as able & meete ffor that charge. For thei had sufficient triall and testimonie thereof by that which thei hard & sawe by them, & had receaved of others. So thei praied for their watchfulnes & diligence, & promised their obedience.

Likewise an order was agreed on ffor their meetinges together ffor ther exercises therein, as for praier, thanckesgiuing, reading of the Scriptures, for exhortation & edifying, either by all men which had the guift or by those which had a speciall charge before others. And for the lawefulnes off putting forth questions, to learne the trueth, as iff anie thing seemed doubtful & hard, to require some to shewe it more plainly, or for anie to shewe it himself & to cause the rest to vnderstand it. Further for noting out anie speciall matter of edifying at the meeting, or for tolckig seuerally thereto, with some particulars, iff none did require publike audience, or if no

weightier matter were handled of others. Againe it was agreed that aynie might protest, appeale, complaine, exhort, dispute, reprove &c as he had occasion, but yet in due order, which Was then also declared. Also that all should further the kingdom off God in themselves, & especiallie in their charge & household, iff they had anie, or in their freindes & companions & whoseouer was Worthie. Furthermore thei particularlie agreed off the manner, howe to Watch to disorders, & reforme abuses, & for assembling the companie, for teaching priuatlie, & for warning and rebukeing both priuatlie & openlie, for appointing publick humbling in more rare judgements, and publick thankesgeuing in straunger blessings, for gathering & testifying voices in debating matters, & propounding them in the name off the rest that agree, for an order of chosing teachers, guides & releueers, when thei want, for separating cleane from uncleane, for releauing anie into the fellowship, for preseting the dailie successe of the church, & the wantes thereof, for seeking to other churches to haue their help, being better reformed, or to bring them to reformation, for taking an order that none contend openlie, nor persecute, nor trouble disorderedly, nor bring false doctrine, nor euile cause after once or twice Warning or rebuke.

Thus all things were handled, set in order & agreed on to the comfort off all, & soe the matter wrought & prospered by the good hand of God.

This account gives us at least the substance of the first known church covenant made by Browne. The same covenant may have been renewed also in Browne's church after it had moved to Middleburg. "First, therefore, thei gave their consent to ioine themselves to the Lord in one covenant." That was the basis of their fellowship.

The substance also, of possibly the next earliest church covenant to be found, of the date 1588 or earlier, is given in the "deposition of William Clerke, taken 8 March, 1592," as follows:

He sayth he hath bene of the forsayd congregation [of Separatists in the neighborhood of London] these foure or fyve years, and made promise to stand with the sd. congregation so long as they did stand for the truth and glory of God, being then of that congregation at that tyme about twenty, or thereabouts.—Harleian MSS., 7042: p. 110. Cited in Doctor Dexter's "Congregationalism," pp. 255, 256, note 2.

After Browne's return from Middelburg in 1592, Francis Johnson became pastor of the above-mentioned brotherhood congregation. The covenants used in the church at Middle-

burg in 1591, and also in the congregation at London in 1592 or 1593, during Johnson's pastorates, have fortunately been preserved.

We are told how Johnson came to employ a covenant in his church in Middleburg. Since 1589 or 1590, he had been pastor of "the church of English Merchants of the Staple" in that city. This was the church in which "Cartwright and Dudley Fenner had successively ministered," and therefore was not a Brownist congregation. In fact, Johnson had taken special pains to spy out the publications of the Separatists, and in 1591 he had the pleasure of seeing the whole edition of Barrowe and Greenwood's "Plaine Refutation" burned at Dort. He kept a copy for himself, however, that he might study their errors. The result was that he read the whole book, and evidently changed his views in a short time to such an extent that he drew up the following "Articles" (the term covenant is not used, but the document is in reality a covenant), the signing of which was withstood by Mr. Thomas Ferrers. Whether these articles were signed generally by the church is not known, but from the fact that Johnson was in London in 1592, and pastor of a Separatist church there, it may be inferred that his plan did not entirely please the church in Middleburg, for those who would not sign, even if they had formerly been members of the church, might be considered so no longer. These articles of Francis Johnson probably furnish us with the earliest known English church-covenant document, containing genuine Brownist-Separatist views, as our information of earlier covenants may be fragmentary, and is drawn either from books or from manuscripts concerning Brownist court proceedings. The text of the document in hand reads as follows:

Francis Johnson his articles, wch he vrged to be vnder written by the Englishe Marchants in Middleboroughe in October. 1591. withstoode by me Thomas Ferrers, then Deputie of the Companie there.

Wee whose names are vnderwritten, doe beleve and acknowledge the truthe of the Doctrine and fayth of our Lorde Jesus Christe, wch is revealed vnto vs in the Canon of the Scriptures of the olde and newe Testament.

Wee doe acknowledge, that God in his ordinarie meanes for the bringinge vs vnto and keepinge of vs in this faythe of Christe, And an holie Obedience thereof, hath sett in his Churche teachinge and rulinge Elders, Deacons, and Helpers: And that this his Ordinance is to continue vnto the ende of the worlde as well vnder Christian princes, as vnder heathen Magistrates.

Wee doe willinglie ioyne together to live as the Churche of Christe, watchinge one over another, and submittinge our selves vnto them, to whom the Lorde Jesus committeth the oversight of his Churche, guidinge and censuring vs according to the rule of the worde of God.

To this ende wee doe promise henceforthe to keepe what soever Christe our Lorde hath commanded vs, as it shall please him by his holie spiritt out of his worde to give knowledge thereof and abilitie there vnto.

His opinions and exposicons vpon these  
fower Articles, as afore.

That for anie wch haue bene of this Churche and will not vnder-write these wth promise (as God shall inhable them) to stande to the forme and everle poynte of them, againste men and Angells vnto the deathe; otherwise he may not be received as a member in this Churche.

And allso that any man once havinge adioyned him selfe to this Englishe church in Middleboroughe, he cannot fynde any warrant by the worde of God, that after the same partie is to adioyne him selfe to anye other Churche, either in Englande or els where; but there, as the Discipline is rightlie established, as in this Churche.

Robert Browne's church covenant idea seems generally, if not always, to have been accepted by the earliest Independent churches, as Burrage remarks. In fact, without some such basal idea it would have been almost impossible to form a strictly Separatist church. Yet the word "covenant," does not appear to have been used by all the earliest Independent leaders. For the word "covenant" such expressions as "articles" to be signed, "a promise," "an agreement," etc., were sometimes substituted. Oftentimes also the covenant idea seems to be implied by the use of such phraseology as "joyned by their willing consent."

The degree in which the earliest Independent leaders accepted the church covenant idea may be estimated somewhat from the following quotations.

Barrowe and Greenwood, who were working for a Congregational polity between Brownism and Presbyterianism, in a paper sent to Cartwright about 1589, define the true church as

A companie of Faithful people: separated from the vnbeleuers and heathen of the land: gathered in the name of Christ, whome they truelie worship, and redily obey as thier only King Priest and Prophet [notice that these last words occur often in the text of later covenants, especially in America]: ioyned together as members of one bodie.—*Dexter's Congregationalism*," pp. 222-223.

In this quotation the word "covenant" is not used, and in Barrowe's chief treatise, entitled a "Brief Discouerie of the False Church," of the date 1590, the word "covenant" is evidently not employed.—*Dexter's "Congregationalism,"* p. 237.

The following citation from the Confession of Faith of the exiled English church in Amsterdam originally drawn up in 1596, clearly indicates that the covenant idea was employed by the Separatists in Amsterdam:

And being come forth of this antichristian estate vnto the freedom and true profession of Christ, besides the instructing and well guyding of their owne families, they are willingly to ioyne together in christian communion and orderly covenant, and by free confession of the faith and obediece of Christ to vnite themselves into peculiar and visible congregations: wherin, as members of one body wherof Christ is the only head, they are to worship and serve God according to his word, remembering to keep holy the Lords day.

After the accession of James I. to the throne a petition was sent to him, in which the differences between the Separatists and the Church of England were set forth. The word "covenant" does not occur in this, but may be implied in the following:

That every true visible church, is a company of people called and separated from the world by the word of God, and joyned to-

gether by voluntarie profession of the faith of Christ, in the fellowship of the Gospell.—Dexter's "Congregationalism," p. 307.

In a letter of Hugh Bromhead, one of John Smyth's faithful followers, written about 1608, before Smyth's separation, to William Hamerton of London is the following direct statement concerning the general use of the church covenant in the English ehurehes of Holland:

"Thirdly, we seek the fellowship of His faithful and obedient servants, and together with them to enter covenant with the Lord," etc.—*J. Hunter: Founders of New-Plymouth, London, 1854. Appendix N, p. 167.*

In 1610 John Robinson published his "Ivstification of Separation from the Church of England." In this he says:

A company consisting though but of two or three separated from the world whether vnchristian, or antichristian, and gathered into the name of Christ by a covenant made to walk in all the wayes of God knowen vnto them, is a church, and so hath the whole power of Christ. —Dexter's "Congregationalism," p. 393.

In a work by Henry Jacob, however, printed at Leyden in 1610, and entitled "The Divine Beginning and Institution of Christ's true Visible or Ministerial Church," occurs the following definition of a Christian church:

A true Visible & Ministeriall Church of Christ is a number of faithfull people joyned by their willing consent in a spirituall outward society or body politick, ordinarily coming together in one place instituted by Christ in his New Testament, & having the power to exercise Ecclesiastical government and all God's other spiritual ordinances (the means of salvation) in & for itself immediately from Christ.

The absence of the word "covenant" from this description has been noted and commented upon, but it is not very important. The idea is implied in the "wulling consent" and the "body politick" is the phrase afterward used in the Mayflower Compact. Moreover, Jacob employed a covenant in his London Church, as we shall presently see.

The manner in which the covenant was adopted appears to have varied in the different churches. John Murton has

preserved for us an account of the manner in which John Robinson's church entered into covenant in 1606, which may or may not be quite accurate. He declares, "That there was first one stood up and made a covenant, and then another, and these two joined together, and so a third, and these became a church." This record may not be wholly accurate. We have a much more detailed and interesting account of the covenant as it was adopted in the church organized ten years later in London under the pastoral care of Henry Jacob. The manner in which Jacob's Church was formed in 1616, has been recorded most fully in the W. A. Jessey Records, found in the Gould Manuscript. The following is the account:

The Church Anno 1616 was gathered

Hereupon ye said Henry Jacob wth Sabine Staismore, . . . & divers others well informed Saints haveing appointed a Day to Seek ye Face of ye Lord in fasting & Prayer, wherein that perticular of their Union, together as a Church was mainly comended to ye Lord: in ye ending of ye Day they ware United, Thus. Those who minded this present Union & so joyning together joyned both hands each wth other Brother and stood in a Ringwise: their intent being declared, H Jacob and each of the Rest made some confession or Profession of their Faith & Repentance, some ware longer some ware briefer, Then they Covenanted together to walk in all Gods Ways as he had revealed or should make known to them.

The covenant idea was not allowed to go unchallenged. The church polity of the Puritans was avowedly based on the New Testament and the word "covenant" came to them out of the Old Testament. In 1588, Stephen Bredwell published a book called "The Rasing of the Foundations of Brownisme" in which he attacked the covenant idea. He said:

A Church which consisteth of beleeuing people, builded so by fayth, vpon Iesus Christ the heade corner stone is in a two folde condition to be considered: the first is the verie knitting vnto Christ, wherein alone standeth the life and beeing of a Church, and in nothing else.

And like as euerie one particularly is iustified for a Christian, through their onely vniting with Christ by fayth, euen so are manie together iustified for a Church of Christ, through such vnion with

him onely. And then, if this vnion giue it the forme of a Church, it muste necessarilie bee a Church, before it practise discipline, because our discipline in question hath no place, but in an vnited bodie, or congregation.

The other thing that I would haue the reader perfect in is this: that this Troublechurch Browne, not receyuing the loue of the trueth, touching the being of a Church in Christ by faith, but struing for other groundes and essentiall causes thereof, which the Lorde neuer acknowledged, is (in a heauie, though iust iudgement), compassed about with a strong delusion, so as hee hath not abstained from defiling the verie couenant of life, to his owne, and all that follow after him, most certaine destruction, if the balme of Gods grace bee not sent in time to heale them. For in the forepart of his answere to maister Cartwright, he miserable confoundeth the couenant of the lawe with the couenant of the Gospel. Whereof the first hath the condition of workes a part: the other is made simple without condition of workes, if we belieue only. He abuseth to his purpose a number of places, all which proue that the establishment of the couenant of grace hath necessarily good works ioyned withall, as effects or fruits, but not as causes, and so any part of the couenant, as he grossely supposeth.

The matter of a church wee haue. Let us nowe see what may be the fourme. . . For as it is likewise agreeable to all reason, that the vniting and knitting together of Christ and Christians, bee graunted the formall cause of a Church. Nowe this vnition is by two meanes, the one eternall, the other seruing but for this life. . . The temporal vnition, which (as I sayd) serueth for this life, is by faith: which shall cease in the day of the reuelation of the Saints of God. . . Meane time, faith is as the engrafting of the braunches into the stock.

Here we meete with that foolishe and vayne exception of Browne agaynst Ma. C. [artwright] namely, That Christ is the life and essence of the Church, and not faith, which is, as though faith had not direct relation to Christ, and Christ to faith in this consideration of a Church, wherein neyther can fayth bee considered without Christ, nor yet Christ as theyr head without faith.

The Anabaptists had been forerunners in the employment of the covenant idea, and Baptist authors have sometimes insisted that the early Congregationalists, not even excepting Robert Browne, must have learned it from the Baptists. But the Baptists ceased to hold it as their own. In proportion as they laid emphasis upon the mode of baptism the supreme importance of the covenant ceased to occupy its place in their thought; while with the Congregationalists the covenant attained to an importance little if anything less than sacramental.

In a book entitled "A Defence of the Doctrine Propounded by the Synode at Dort: against Iohn Mvrton and his Associates, in a Treatise intituled; *A Description what God, &c.* With the Refutation of their Answer to a Writing touching Baptism. By Iohn Robinson. Printed in the year, 1624," are the following passages, referring to Murton's mature views concerning the formation of churches of Christ:

Now followeth our main foundation, that as the infants of Abraham, and of the Israelites his posterity, were taken into the Church-covenant, or covenant of life and salvation, as they [Murton and his associates] call it (and rightly in a true sense) with their parents, and circumcised: so are the infants of the faithfull now, and to receiv accordingly the seal of Baptism: to which they say, and proue (as they say) that neither Circumcision was, nor Baptism is a seal of the Covenant of salvation, but the spirit of promise which is ever the same.

Murton and his associates teach:

That members, and Churches of Christ are made both by faith, and baptism, and not by the one only. They oft say, but never proue, that Churches are gathered by baptism.

Commenting on the above Burrage says, "From the above quoted passages alone we are obliged to draw our conclusions as to the method used in forming the earliest Baptist churches in England. One point is clear, namely, that from 1611 at least Murton and Helwys emphasized repentance, faith, and especially baptism as the means of "gathering" or organizing a Christian church. It would also appear that even from 1608 or 1609 they had held this view with Smyth, and had formed their first church by baptism, though as we have seen, they probably made also covenant promises. But after Smyth and his followers had been driven out, Helwys and Murton evidently continued to modify their opinions till the idea of a church covenant became of no importance.

"From this time their churches were to be gathered by faith and baptism. With them baptism had come to take the place of a church covenant, for one now entered the church by

baptism. However, in a sense the covenant idea was still maintained by them, but not the church covenant idea of Browne. Baptist churches were not to be outside the covenant promises because they did not use an explicit church covenant. Baptism is, as it were, the act of making an implicit covenant, or rather is the means of entering into the new covenant, which is not a church covenant, but is a 'covenant of grace and salvation,' the covenant of the New Testament, which always remains the same, has been made forever on God's part, and the benefits of which may be had by any who believe the gospel and are baptized.

"It is therefore probable that even when Helwys and Murton founded the first Baptist church in England at London, no explicit church covenant was employed, and if not then, certainly not later.—The Covenant Idea, pp. 77-78.

Burrage also says of Baptist Churches in America, "The two earliest Baptist Churches in this country were organized before 1640, namely the First Church in Providence, R. I., formed in 1638, and the church in Newport, R. I., founded not long after. The Providence church, however, never adopted a covenant, and the records of the Newport church in the early days were in the hands of the pastors, and have but partially been preserved, so that its original church covenant, if indeed there was one, is no longer known."—The Covenant Idea, p. 95.

## V. THE PILGRIM COVENANT

Most interesting and important among all the early covenants is that of the church of the Pilgrim Fathers. This covenant is referred to by Cotton Mather in his *Magnalia*, and given in substance in Bradford's *History*, and partially also in Edward Winslow's "*Hypocrisie Unmasked.*" This church had its beginning at Gainsborough—1602. It is thought to have remained intact till 1606, when some of the members removed to Scrooby, where John Robinson became their pastor. In 1607 and 1608 this section of the church went to Amsterdam, and in 1609 to Leyden. The other part of the church in 1607, with the pastor, John Smyth, later founder of the English General Baptists, crossed to Amsterdam.

Prof. Edward Arber, F. S. A., in his "*Story of the Pilgrim Fathers,*" has suggested some new points in regard to the churches at Gainsborough and Scrooby that are important for us, as they bear indirectly upon the covenants used in these churches.

Speaking of the peasants of the Pilgrim District he says:

Herein, They were more fortunate in their intellectual development than Shakespeare. They had educated leaders. He had none. Clyfton, Brewster, Robinson, and Smyth were all Cambridge University men; and but for them there never would have been any Pilgrim Fathers at all. So going back to the ultimate facts, we say that the Pilgrim movement originated in the rectory and church of Babworth in Nottinghamshire; and that it was mainly a Nottinghamshire movement.

To this rectory, then, some forty-five months before Governor Bradford was born, came this Derbyshire man, the Rev. Richard Clyfton, æt. 33. He was what was then called a "forward [advanced] preacher, or a reformist."

We have adduced, at pp. 133, 134, irrefutable evidence that, on the 22d March, 1605, the Rev. John Smyth was still a conformist minister, and preacher of the city of Lincoln. So that, at that date,

he had not even come to Gainsborough, where, after nine months of doubting, he finally adopted the principles of the Separation. The formation of the Gainsborough Church cannot therefore be earlier than 1606.

We are not aware of any evidence tending to prove in the slightest degree that Robinson was ever a member of Smyth's church; and we have proved, at pp. 133, 134, that the Gainsborough Church was not established till 1606. Therefore if Robinson went north in 1604, he must have gone to Scrooby."

So that, although Clyfton deserted the Pilgrim church in 1609, he must ever be regarded as the senior of the leaders of that Separation. . . The Separatist movement continued to grow; but, as Governor Bradford tells us at page 70, the church at Scrooby was not formally organized till 1606, when the late rector of Babworth [Clyfton] became its pastor, and the Rev. John Robinson became his assistant, with probably one or more deacons.—"The Story of the Pilgrim Fathers, 1606-1623 A. D.; as told by Themselves, their Friends, and their Enemies." London, Boston, and New York, 1897, pp. 48-52, 54.

Apparently the first covenant was in 1602, and of it Cotton Mather says,—

A Number of devout and serious Christians in the English Nation, finding the Reformation of the Church in that Nation, according to the Word of God, and the Design of many among the First Reformers, to labour under a sort of hopeless Retardation, they did, Anno 1602, in the North of England, enter into a Covenant, wherein expressing themselves desirous, not only to attend the Worship of our Lord Jesus Christ, with a freedom from humane Inventions and Additions, but also to enjoy all the Evangelical Institutions of that Worship, they did like those Macedonians, that are therefore by the Apostle Paul commended, give themselves up, first unto God, and then to one another.

The text of the covenant adopted at Scrooby in 1606 is contained in the following passage from Bradford:

So many therefore of these professors as saw ye evill of these things, in thes parts and whose harts ye Lord had touched wth heavenly zeale for his trueth, they shooke of this yoake of anti-christian bondage, and as ye Lords free people, joyned them selves (by a covenant of the Lord) into a church estate, in ye fellowship of ye gospell, to walke in all his wayes, made known, or to be made known unto them, according to their best endeavours, whatsoever it should cost them, the Lord assisting them.

Edward Winslow's recollection in 1646 of John Robinson's last word concerning this covenant, in his farewell ad-

dress to the Pilgrim Fathers, is that "Here also he put us in mind of our Church-Covenant (at least that part of it) whereby wee promise and covenant with God and one with another, to receive whatsoever light or truth shall be made known to us from his written Word."

Of the sacredness of the covenant idea as it was held in the church of the Pilgrims, we are assured in many ways, especially in a letter signed by John Robinson and William Brewster, and dated Leyden, December 15, 1617, to Sir Edwin Sandys, in reply to a letter of his dated London, Nov. 12, 1617. This answer contains a direct reference to the church covenant:

"4. We are knit together as a body in a more strict and sacred bond and covenant of the Lord, or the violation of which we make conscience; and by virtue whereof we do hold ourselves straightly tied to all care of each other's good, and of the whole by every, and so mutual."—New England's Memorial, 1669, by Nathaniel Morton.

## VI. CHURCH AND COMMUNITY COVENANTS

The church covenant idea was not simply popular in New England, it became the distinguishing characteristic of its life and organization. Originally intended as a basis for churches, it came in time to be used for the organization of towns. A notable instance is that of Guilford, Conn., established in 1639. The covenant was signed on shipboard before the colonists reached New England and was signed by twenty-five colonists. Doubtless this method would have become still more general had it not been that in 1631 the Massachusetts General Court prescribed that the franchise should be limited to church members. As therefore the church organization and the town organization were virtually identical there was seldom need of a separate covenant for the town and the Guilford covenant stands as a notable example of the application of the church covenant idea to town organization. The covenant is as follows:

We whose names are hereunder written, intending by God's gracious permission to plant ourselves in New England, and, if it may be, in the southerly part about Quinnipiack, we do faithfully promise each to each, for ourselves and our families, and those that belong to us, that we will, the Lord assisting us, sit down and join ourselves together in one entire plantation, and to be helpful each to the other in any common work, according to every man's ability, and as need shall require; . . . As for our gathering together in a church way, and the choice of officers and members to be joined together in that way, we do refer ourselves until such time as it shall please God to settle us in our plantation.—Rev. J. B. Felt, in "Ecclesiastical History of New England," Vol. 1, pp. 406, 407.

Another, and important instance of the covenant used as the basis of organization both for community and church, was that of New Haven. Led by Davenport and Eaton, the founder-Scripture holds forth." "During these toilsome first months

ers had arrived at "their desired haven" in the early spring of 1638, but not until fourteen months later, after much prayer, study and discussion, did they consider the business fully mature for action. Soon after their landing they had made a provisional "plantation covenant" mutually pledging themselves to be governed in their future action relating either to the church or to the civil order, "by those rules which the of the new plantation," says Bacon, "while their views of polity in church and state were so deliberately canvassed, they were not without organization. The town was 'cast into several private meetings wherein they that dwelt most together gave their accounts one to another of God's gracious work upon them, and prayed together, and conferred to mutual edification, and had knowledge one of another.'" When at last they were assembled in Mr. Newman's barn the solemnities of the day were introduced by a sermon from Davenport on this text, "Wisdom hath builded her house; she hath hewn out her seven pillars." By common consent it was agreed "that twelve men be chosen, that their fitness for the foundation-work may be tried;" and "that it be in the power of these twelve to choose out of themselves seven that shall be most approved of the major part, to begin the church." It was the 14th of June, 1639, when "the seven pillars" were hewn out. By covenant among themselves, and by receiving others into the same compact, it was held that a church was constituted on the 22d of August. "With one accord they accepted so much of the Separatist polity as to hold that the church existed by virtue of a mutual agreement (either tacit or expressed) among certain individual believers that they would be a church. It is easy to believe that the example and argument of the Plymouth Separatists had less to do in bringing them to this position, than the exigencies of the situation. To the extreme tenets of the extreme Separatists, renouncing fellowship with faithful ministers and worshippers in the

Church of England, the churches of New England generally gave no adhesion.”—*Bacon*: Congregationalists, p. 51.

The most notable example of the use of the covenant idea in secular organization is afforded us in the relation of the Pilgrim covenant itself to that of the Mayflower Compact. That is, indeed, one of the notable incidents of modern history. The new edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* tells that Theodore Roosevelt laid the cornerstone of the Pilgrim monument in Provincetown, on August 7, 1907, and that somebody dedicated it three years later, but entirely forgets that it was William H. Taft who delivered the principal address on the day of dedication. We have been reading the addresses of both presidents, the one which President Taft addressed to the people who heard him, and the one which President Roosevelt addressed to Wall Street, and those of the eminent speakers who were with them on both occasions. All were addresses of note; and the one by Senator Lodge on the first occasion—for he was the one man who spoke on both occasions—was a notable interpretation of the Mayflower compact. But of them all on both days, only one address, that by President Eliot, caught the historic setting of the Mayflower compact.

President Roosevelt, as everybody knows, mixed up the Pilgrims and the Puritans, and then proceeded to hit the big corporations with a big stick. To this day they remember the Provincetown address. What he said about the corporations does not now concern us. What he said about the Puritans, whom he supposed landed at Provincetown, was this:

“We have gained a joy of living which the puritan had not and which it is a good thing for every people to have and to develop. Let us see to it that we do not lose what is more important still, that we do not lose the Puritan’s iron sense of duty, his unbending, unflinching will to do the right as it was given him to see the light.”

President Taft was more cautious and said nothing that disturbed business. He delivered a short and graceful address, in which he said :

“Other efforts had been made on the New England coast to found colonies for profit before this. But theirs was the first attempt by men seeking political and religious independence to secure an asylum in America where they might escape the fussy, meddling, narrow and tyrannical restraints imposed by the first of the Stuarts. Out of the logic of their intellectual processes there came ultimately religious freedom, while in their energy and intensity of their religious faith they uncomplainingly met the hardships that were inevitable in their search for liberty.”

Ambassador James Bryce spoke appreciatively of America's heritage from the Pilgrims, and said :

“It was their loyalty to truth and to duty that moved them to quit their English homes and friends and face the rigors of a winter far harsher than their own in an untrodden land where enemies lurked in trackless forests. Faith and duty when wedded to courage, for without courage they avail little, are the most solid basis on which the greatness of a nation can rest.”

Senator Henry Cabot Lodge delivered a really able address on the first occasion, and one of considerable value on the second. He had some difficulty in keeping out of his own way, but the two speeches were thoroughly worthy of the occasions on which they were delivered. In the first of them he spoke with fine penetration of the principles of the Mayflower Compact :

“All the men signed the compact. The compact did not establish representative government. That was to come later, and was something familiar to all Englishmen. It was not the beginning of representative government on this continent ; that had taken place the year before, when the Virginia burg-

esses were summoned by the Governor in accordance with the terms of a charter prepared in England. The men in the Mayflower were called to their task by no governor, and their compact was not drawn in England, but here. It was the voluntary and original act of those who signed it, and it embodied two great principles or ideas. The first was that the people themselves joined in making the compact each with the other. The second principle was that this agreement thus made was the organic law or constitution, to be changed only in great stress and after submission to the entire body politic and with the utmost precaution. The force and worth of this great conception have been attested since by almost countless constitutions of governments, both at home and abroad. Under that theory of government we have preserved the sober liberty, freedom and ordered liberty which have been the glory of the Republic. The little company of the Mayflower, pathetic in their weakness and suffering, imposing and triumphant in what they did, has belonged to the ages these many years. The work they wrought has endured, and we would not barter their inheritance for the heritage of kings. But that which was greatest in their work was the conception of the organic law embodied in the compact, a conception full of wisdom and patience, prefiguring a commonwealth in which order and progress were to go hand in hand."

But for a real interpretation of the religious history lying back of the compact, it remained for President Eliot to refer to that, and to trace the evolution of the compact from the earlier covenant to the church. He said:

"In the cabin of the Mayflower, on the 21st day of November, 1620, all the adult males of the company signed a compact by which they set up a government which did not derive its powers, like all previous colonies, from a sovereign or parent state, but rested on the consent of those to be governed and on manhood suffrage. The act was apparently unpremeditated, and the language of the compact was direct and

simple. It was an agreement, or covenant, or cooperative act, from which was to spring not only a stable government for the little colony, but a great series of constitutions for free states. The most remarkable phases in this compact are, 'covenant and combine ourselves into a civil body politic,' and 'by virtue hereof.' . . .

"Although the signing of that compact was a sudden act, caused by the refusal of the captain of the *Mayflower* on the day before to take his vessel through the dangerous shoals which lie off the southeastern coast of Massachusetts and so bring it to the Hudson River, where the English charter obtained by the Pilgrims before leaving Leyden authorized them to establish their colony, it was an act which the whole experience of their church in England and in Holland, and the essence of the doctrines taught by their pastor and elders naturally though unexpectedly led up to. They had been trained to disregard all authority which they had not themselves instituted or accepted, and they had also become accustomed to cooperative action for the common good. Indeed, the whole doctrine and method of cooperative good-will cannot be better stated today than it was stated by Robinson and Bradford in 1618 in one of their five reasons for the proposed emigration from Holland to America: 'We are knit together in a body in a most strict and sacred bond and covenant of the Lord, of the violation whereof we make great conscience, and by virtue whereof we do hold ourselves straightly tied to care of each other's good and of the whole by every one, and so mutually.' Everything that is good in modern socialism is contained in that single sentence, with nothing of the bad or foolish."

One of the most interesting and significant facts in the life of the Pilgrim community that later settled in Plymouth is the calm and undisputed assurance which they had of their right, as the people of God, to organize a Church with full authority to do all that any church could do, and later to establish a State with trial by jury, and the right to enact

and execute just laws, not even excepting the right to inflict capital punishment, to declare war and to enter into treaties. The account of both these organizations is contained in the Bradford manuscript, the first apparently in the year 1606, and the other under date of November 11, Old Style, 1620. The earlier of these two initial records reads,—

So many therefore of these professors as saw ye evill of these things, in thes parts, and whose harts ye Lord had touched with heavenly zeal for his trueth, they shooke of this yoake of anti-christian bondage, and as ye Lord's free people, joyned them selves (by a covenant of the Lord) into a church estate, in ye fellowship of ye gospell, to walke in all his wayes, made known or to be made known to them, according to their best endeavours, whatever it should cost them, the Lord assisting them. And that it cost them something this ensewing historie will declare.

In the organization of this and similar churches, they asked no authority from any king, pope or bishop. As "the Lord's free people" they created a Church, and obtained their authority direct from God.

It is no accident that records the church organization first and the organization of the civil body later. The common phrase which speaks of "civil and religious liberty" inverts the historic order. Religious liberty came first, and civil liberty grew out of it.

In quite as dignified a manner, and one as free from any question of their inherent right, they organized their State, not as a poor substitute for royal authority, but as something "as firme as any patent" from the Crown, "and in some respects more sure."

I shall a litle returne backe and begine with a combination made by them before they came ashore, being ye first foundation of their governmente in this place; occasioned partly by ye discontented and mutinous speeches that some of the strangers amongst them had let fall from them in ye ship—That when they came ashore they would use their own libertie; for none had power to command them, the patente they had being for Virginia, and not for New-england, which belonged to an other Government, with which ye Virginia Company had nothing to doe. And partly that shuch an

acte by them done (this their condition considered) might be as firme as any patent, and in some respects more sure.

The forme was as followeth:

In ye name of God, Amen. We whose names are underwritten, the loyall subjects of our dread soveraigne Lord, King James, by ye Grace of God, of Great Britaine, Franc, & Ireland king, defender of ye faith, & c., haveing undertaken, for ye glorie of God, and advancemente of ye Christian faith, and honour of our king & countrie, a voyage to plant ye first colonie in ye Northerne parts of Virginia, doe by these presents solemnly & mutuallly in ye presence of God, and one of another, covenant & combine our selves together into a civill body politick, for our better ordering & preservation & furtherance of ye ends aforesaid; and by vertue hearof to enacte, constitute, and frame such just & equall lawes, ordinances, acts, constitutions, & offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meete & convenient for ye generall good of ye Colonie, unto which we promise all due submission and obedience. In witness wherof we have hereunder subscribed our names at Cape-Codd ye 11, of November, in ye year of ye raigne of our soveraigne lord, King James, of England, Franc, & Ireland ye eighteenth, and of Scotland ye fiftie fourth. Ano: Dom. 1620.

The government of the Congregational Churches, and of the United States are closely related both in substance and in history. The form of government, which the Pilgrims based on manhood suffrage and the authority of God in the affairs of the Church, they wrought into the foundation of their little republic at Plymouth Rock. Virtually a government which derives its just powers from the consent of the governed is a government based on a covenant between the citizens and the commonwealth.

## VII. EARLY AMERICAN COVENANTS

Whether the Puritan churches of New England would follow the Plymouth Church in its form of organization, was a more important question than any one at the time could well have realized. The opportune visit of Doctor (and Deacon) Fuller of Plymouth to Salem at the time of a general sickness in Salem appears to have had much to do with dispelling the erroneous impression of the leaders of the Salem colony concerning the supposed dangers of the Plymouth form of organization. Whatever prejudgments the Salem people had formed against the Separatists melted away under the kindly ministrations of Deacon Fuller, and under his statement of the principles and usages of the Plymouth church. The letter of thanks from Endicott to the governor of Plymouth is a classic in American church history, and a fine tribute to the good work which Dr. Fuller did for the body and soul of Salem:

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

It is a thing not usual that servants to one master and of the same household should be strangers; I assure you I desire it not—nay, to speak more plainly, I cannot be so to you. God's people are marked with one and the same mark and sealed with one and the same seal, and have, for the main, one and the same heart guided by one and the same Spirit of truth; and where this is there can be no discord—nay, there must needs be sweet harmony. The same request with you I make unto the Lord, that we may, as Christian brethren, be united by a heavenly and unfeigned love, bending all our hearts and forces in furthering a work beyond our strength, with reverence and fear fastening our eyes always on him that only is able to direct and prosper all our ways.

I acknowledge myself much bound to you for your kind love, and care in sending Mr. Fuller among us; and I rejoice much that I am by him satisfied touching your judgments of the outward form of God's worship. It is as far as I can yet gather, no other than is

warranted by the evidence of truth, and the same which I have professed and maintained ever since the Lord in mercy revealed himself to me; being very far different from the common report that hath been spread of you touching that particular. But God's children must not look for less here below, and it is the great mercy of God that he strengthens them to go through with it.

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

John Endicott.

The Salem church was organized in 1629 with the following covenant, only forty-one words in length:

The Salem Covenant of 1629.

We Covenant with the Lord and one with another; and doe bynd ourselves in the presence of God, to walke together in all his waies, according as he is pleased to reveale himself unto us in his Blessed word of truth.

The church in Dorchester was organized with a similar covenant and probably of no greater length, though its exact text has been lost.

Concerning the early Puritan churches, Edward Winslow, in describing the way in which the Massachusetts men, in some things, copied after the Plymouth way, says:

Which being by them well weighed and considered, they also entred into Covenant with God, and one with another *to walke in all his wayes revealed, or as they should bee made knowne unto them, and to worship him according to his will revealed in his written word onely.*—Hypocrisie Unmasked, etc. (1646), 92.

There was little discussion, if any, concerning the length or precise content of church covenants. Each minister wrote his own. The value was never assumed to be in a precise form of words, but there were discussions as to whether the covenant should be assented to orally, or whether silence might give consent to a covenant publicly read, and as to whether a covenant should be signed. No great stress was laid upon

these discussions, but in general there was little disposition to insist upon signing the covenant; confession with the mouth, in the presence of God's people, was deemed the more orderly way.

That American Puritan churches during this period had decided that a Christian church could be properly formed without use of an explicit covenant is seen from the following: "*Wee frequently acknowledge that this Covenant which constituteth a Church, is either implicite or explicite, and that Congregations in England are truly Churches having an implicite covenant.*" ("A DEFENCE OF THE ANSWER made unto the Nine Questions or Positions sent from New-England," etc. 1645. Preface, p. 13).

Professor Walker, in speaking of the implicitness allowable in the formation of early American Congregational churches says: "the 'Cambridge Platform' asserted that a verbal covenant was not the only form of the basal agreement, for 'a company of faithful persons' express such a union 'by their constant praetise in coming together for the publick worship of God, & by their religious subjection unto the ordinances of God.'" ("Hist. of the Congreg. Churches." Pp. 217, 218.)

The passage from which Professor Walker here quotes as given in "Creeds and Platforms," pp. 207, 208,, reads in full as follows:

"4. This Voluntary Agreement, Consent or Covenant (for all these are here taken for the same): Although the more express and plain it is, the more fully it puts us in mind of our mutuall duty, & stirreth us up to it, & leaveth lesse room for the questioning of the Truth of the *Church-estate* of a Company of professors, & the Truth of membership of particular persons: [6] yet wee conceive, the substance of it is kept, where there is a real Agreement & consent, of a company of faithful persons to meet constantly together in one Congregation, for the publick worship of God, & their mutuall edifica-

tion: which real agreement & consent they doe express by their constant practise in comming together for their publick worship of God, & by their religious subjection unto the ordinances of God there: the rather, if wee doe consider how Scripture covenants have been entered into, not only expressly by word of mouth, but by sacrifice; by hand writing, & seal: & also sometimes by silent consent, without any writing, or expression of words at all."

Robert Baillie in his "Dissvisive from the Errours of the Time," (London, 1645) says:

"It [the church covenant] is no more with us then this, an assent and resolution professed by them that are to be admitted by us, with promise to walk in all these wayes pertaining to this Fellowship, so farre as they shall be revealed to them in the Gospel; thus briefly, indefinitely and implicitly, in such like words and no more or otherwise, do we apply our answers to mens consciences. Church-covenant, p. 36. We deny not, but the Covenant in many of the English Congregations is more implicite, and not so plaine as were to bee desired; yet there wants not that reall and substantiall coming together or agreeing in Covenant."

William Rathband also has preserved for us an early definition of the church covenant that gives the following somewhat more complete statement of its proper content:

"And thus they [the Independents, or Congregationalists] define it. Its a solemne and publicke Promise before the Lord and his people, whereby a companie of Christians called (by the power and mercie of God) to the fellowship of Christ, and (by his providence) to dwell together, and (by his Grace) to love and cleave together in the unitie of faith and brotherly love, and desirous to partake (according to the will of God) in all the holy Ordinances of God together in one Congregation, doe bind themselves to the Lord to walke in such wayes of holy worship to him, and of edification one towards another, as God himselfe hath required in his word of

every Church of Christ and the members thereof."—"A Brief Narration of Some Church Courses," etc. London, 1644, p. 15, 16.

The suitable content of an explicit church covenant perhaps is even more fully given in Thomas Lechford's "Plain Dealing or, Nevvs from New England." London, 1642. He says:

They [the American Congregationalists] solemnly enter into a Covenant with God, and one an other (which is called their Church Covenant, and held by them to constitute a Church) to this effect: *viz.*

To forsake the Devill, and all his workes, and the vanities of the sinfull world, and all their former lusts, and corruptions, they have lived and walked in, and to cleave unto, and obey the Lord Jesus Christ, as their onely King and Lawgiver, their onely Priest and Prophet, and to walke together with that Church, in the unity of the faith, and brotherly love, and to submit themselves one unto an other, in all the ordinances of Christ, to mutuall edification, and comfort, to watch over, and support one another.

As the Covenant Idea in England had not been permitted to go unchallenged, so in America it had to defend its right to exist. The English Puritans were quite concerned over the importance attached to the covenant in churches on this side of the water. John Cotton's "Questions and Answers upon Church Government" had as a part of its mission the answering of objections to church covenants, and Richard Mather, the unnamed author of "An Apologie of the Churches in New England for Church Covenant," met the issue directly.

In 1643, there was published in London a work dated six years earlier, relating to this subject. It was entitled, "A Letter of Many Ministers in Old England, Requesting the Judgement of their Reverend Brethren in *New England* concerning Nine Positions Written Anno Dom. 1637," published at London, July 30, 1643. The following quotations from this will give us a clear idea of the nature of the English Puritans' objections to the church covenant:

That Church Covenant which is necessary was not in use in the Apostles times, but the Covenant they entred into bound no man to this condition for ought we reade. They did not prescribe it, no church ever yet covenanted it as necessary to the preservation of the body.

And here we intreat leave to put you in minde of that which you have considered already, schil. That the Church and every member thereof hath entred into Covenant, either expresly or implicately to take God for their God, and to keepe the words of the Covenant and doe them, to seeke the Lord with all their hearts, and to walke before him in truth and uprightnesse: but we never finde that they were called to give account of the worke of grace wrought in their soules, or that the whole Congregation were appointed to be Judge thereof.

The second thing you affirm is, that not only the covenant of grace which is common to all beleivers; but Church-Covenant also which is peculiar to confederates is necessarie to the participation of the Seales.

The chief objection to the covenant, of course, was that it did not appear in the New Testament as an essential condition of church membership. To this Richard Mather's apologie replied:

By entring into Covenant with God, a people come to be the Lords people, that is to say, his Church.

2. If it was of all the people together, the reason was because that Church was a nationall Church: now if a nationall Church becomes a Church by entring into solemne Covenant with God then a Congregationall Church becomes a Church by the same means.

In speaking of the Covenant of the Jewish people a passage is quoted to the effect that

this Covenant was of the whole Church with God and therefore not like our Church-Covenants, which are between the Church and the members, concerning watchfulnesse over one another, and the like.

But this place of Deut. 29 is not sufficient to prove a Church-Covenant in these days: because it is in the Scriptures of the old Testament, for whatsoever must be used in the dayes of the old Testament, must not be proved from the Scriptures of the New Testament, or else it is to be layd aside.

But suppose there were not pregnant places for it in the New Testament, yet it is not enough to prove the same unlawfull: for whatsoever Ordinance of the old Testament, is not repealed in the New Testament, as peculiar to the Jewish Paedagogie, but was of morall and perpetuall equitie, the same bindes us in these dayes, and is to be accounted the revealed will of God in all ages.

In 1648 appeared Thomas Hooker's work, entitled "A Survey of the Summe of Church-Discipline. Wherein, The Way of the Churches of New England is warranted out of the Word." This contains the following valuable statements in regard to the church covenant:

That then which gives the formality of these Churches we are now to inquire: and the conclusion we maintain is this, Mutual covenanting and confoederating of the Saints in the fellowship of the faith according to the order of the Gospel is that which gives constitution and being to a visible church.

2. How the Covenant may be expressed. This Covenant is dispensed or acted after a double manner.

Either Explicitely or Implicitely.

An Explicite Covenant is, when there is an open expression and profession of this engagement in the face of the Assembly, which persons by mutuall consent undertake in the waies of Christ. An Implicit Covenant is, when in their practice they do that, whereby they make themselves engaged to walk in such a society, according to such rules of government, which are exercised amongst them, and so submit themselves thereunto: but doe not make any verball profession thereof.

Quest. If it be here inquired: How far the covenant is of necessity required?

Ans. According to foregoing expressions, the answer may be cast into these conclusions following.

1. An Implicit Covenant preserves the true nature of the true Church, because it carries the formalis ratio of a confoederation in it, by which a Church is constituted. For Implicit and Explicite are but adjuncts, and these separable from the essence. And therefore the essence and being of the covenant may consist with either.

2. In some cases an Implicit covenant may be fully sufficient. As, suppose a whole congregation should consist of such, who were children to the parents now deceased, who were confoederate: Their children were true members according to the rules of the Gospel, by the profession of their fathers covenant, though they should not make any personall and vocall expression of their engagement, as the fathers did.

3. Its most according to the compleatnesse of the rule, and for the better being of the Church, that there be an explicite Covenant. For

1. Thereby the judgement of the members comes to be informed and convinced of their duty more fully.

2. They are thereby kept from cavilling and starting aside from the tenure and terms of the covenant, which they have professed and acknowledged, before the Lord and so many witnesses.

3. Thereby their hearts stand under a stronger tye, and are more quickened and provoked to doe that, which they have before God and the congregation, engaged themselves to doe.

The method of using the church covenant among the early American Congregationalists is indicated in their denial: "*That we make a vocall Church Oath or Covenant, the essentiall forme of a Church, when as wee frequently acknowledge that this Covenant which constituteth a Church, is either implicite or explicite;*" ("A Defence of the Answer made unto the Nine Questions or Positions," etc., 1645, Preface, p. 13.) and in the statement of the English Puritans that "*there would not be such long narrations, of every one severally as now are used, when men do enter into Church-Covenant, when each one makes a good long speech, in the profession of his Faith and Repentance.*"—"An Apologic of the Churches in New-England for Church-Covenant," etc., London, 1643, p. 29.

A clear description of the manner in which early Congregational covenants were used in New England is given in a book entitled "*A Brief Narration of the Practices of the Churches in New-England, in their solemne Worship of God.* London; 1647." It reads as follows:

After this [i. e., individual "confession of faith" and "declaration of . . . effectual calling"], they enter into a sacred and solemne Covenant, engagement, profession (call it what you please) whereby they protest and promise (by the help of Christ) to walk together as becomes a Church of God, in all duties of holinesse before the Lord, and in all brotherly love and faithfulnessse to each other, according unto God, withall producing their Covenant, agreed on before amongst themselves, then read it before the Assembly, and then either subscribe their hands to it, or testifie by word of mouth their agreement thereto.

## VIII. THE HALF-WAY COVENANT

An interesting, and in some respects unfortunate, development of the church covenant Idea, was the Half-Way Covenant, which became popular throughout New England, beginning about the middle of the seventeenth century. The second generation of New England inhabitants had lost much of the piety and fervor which characterized the first founders. There were, of course, many faithful men and women, and there were some who were outwardly immoral and irreligious, but between these two was a third class, composed of men and women who had been baptized and reared in the Christian faith and who were generally people of blameless lives, but who could not claim the religious experiences by which their fathers believed themselves to have passed from death unto life. The first question which perplexed the leaders of the churches was whether these people should be admitted to the Lord's Supper; and the second was whether their children were fit subjects for baptism? There was much discussion of these questions, but it came to be held that these men and women were members of the church by reason of their baptism, and capable of transmitting membership by baptism to their children, but that they themselves were not in full communion. This result was reached, first by the Ministerial Convention of 1657, and afterward by the Synod of 1662. It came about gradually and not without opposition and prolonged discussion. That it seemed to meet a need of the time and that in some cases it produced gratifying results we are not left to doubt. The history of the movement can but impress the thoughtful reader with the genuine Christian earnestness of the men who devised this unhappy compromise, while it shows

the inevitable evil attending a half-way acceptance of the Gospel. Of the conditions which gave rise to the Half-Way Covenant, Dr. Bacon wrote :

“A conflict seemed to be growing more serious with the lapse of every year, between two ideals, both dear to the Puritan heart:—the purity of the church, as consisting of “visible saints and their children,” and the parish system by which the whole population of the several towns should be held under the tutelage of the churches. The growing danger was seriously felt by both parties. The churches and pastors saw the increasing number of those who failed to pass the accepted criteria of membership, and were in danger of drifting afar from any relation to the church; and on the other hand those who had been baptized into the church, who held and cherished the truth that had been taught them, and whose lives were without reproach, but who were unable to testify to the conscious experience of a spiritual change from death to life, found not only themselves debarred from the communion, but their children excluded from baptism as aliens and “strangers from the covenants of the promise.” The situation was growing each year more tense, and there were tendencies in two opposite directions towards a solution of it. One was towards the severely logical individualism of the Baptists, which had no place for infant baptism or infant church-membership. The other was towards “the parish way,” or the Presbyterian way, according to which the baptized children of the parish, arriving at years of discretion and being without reproach, were to be welcomed to the Lord’s table. That the accepted criterion of fitness for church-membership was fallacious, that strictly applied, it would have excluded from communion the foremost theologian and saint of the contemporary Puritan party, Richard Baxter was not going to be made entirely clear to their successors until six generations afterwards (1847) by Horace Bushnell in his treatise of ‘Christian Nurture.’

“The divergence of opinion and of practice was so great and so manifestly increasing as to call for action on the part of the colonial legislatures—always prone to an exorbitant sense of their responsibility in spiritual matters. In 1657 the Massachusetts General Court, moved thereto by Connecticut, invited a conference of leading pastors who, gathering at Boston to the number of seventeen, gave counsel decidedly in favor of a more relaxed rule than that of the Founders. But this was far from appeasing the controversy. The sincere and painful anxiety of such venerated men as Davenport and Charles Chauncy prevailed with many others against any abatement of the conditions of membership in the church. A true synod, including not ministers only but “messengers of the churches,” was summoned to meet at Boston in 1662, and the number in attendance—more than seventy—was proof of the gravity of the question at issue. After protracted and earnest discussion, by a great majority but in face of an earnest protest from some of the best men, the main question before the synod was thus resolved:

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

“It was an illogical compromise between irreconcilable principles. It came, indeed, into general use in New England, but never with universal consent. Instead of ending controversy, it intensified it, giving rise to a copious polemical literature. In conspicuous instances, as in Hartford and in Boston, it rent churches asunder. From New Haven the great and good Davenport, foreseeing the ruin about to befall his cherished ideals through the merger of that little republic with Connecticut, left behind him the fair plain that was dearer to his heart than native land, exclaiming “in New Haven

colony Christ's interest is miserably lost," and went to assume, in his old age, the pastoral office in the First Church in Boston, from which many members had withdrawn to practise the less rigid system in the Third Boston Church—the 'Old South.' The 'Half-Way Covenant' continued in general use for nearly a century, until it melted away in the fervent heat of 'the Great Awakening,' or withered under the rigors of the Edwardean theology.—Bacon pp. 76-80.

Not every Congregational church employed the Half-Way Covenant. Individual pastors prepared them and used them, sometimes with and sometimes without the formal authority of the local church. One of the best examples quoted by Dr. Dexter in his "Congregationalism as seen in its Literature" (page 476) as having been used probably by the old North Church in Boston, the church of the Mathers, is as follows:

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

Two other examples of Half-Way covenants are that of the Salem church, preserved in the Direction of 1665, and that used by the First Church in Hartford in 1696. The texts of these covenants are as follows:

#### The Salem Half-Way Covenant.

I do heartily take and avouch this one God who is made known to us in the Scripture, by the Name of God the Father, and God the Son even Jesus Christ, and God the Holy Ghost to be my God, according to the tenour of the Covenant of Grace; wherein he hath promised to be a God to the Faithfull and their seed after them in their Generations, and taketh them to be his People, and therefore

unfeignedly repenting of all my sins, I do give up myself wholly unto this God to believe in love, serve & Obey him sincerely and faithfully according to his written word, against all the temptations of the Devil, the World, and my own flesh and this unto the death.

I do also consent to be a Member of this particular Church, promising to continue steadfastly in fellowship with it, in the publick Worship of God, to submit to the Order, Discipline and Government of Christ in it, and to the Ministerial teaching, guidance and oversight of the Elders of it, and to the brotherly watch of Fellow Members: and all this according to God's Word, and by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ enabling me thereunto. Amen.

#### The Hartford Half-Way Covenant of 1696.

We do solemnly in y<sup>e</sup> presence of God and this Congregation avouch God in Jesus Christ to be our God one God in three persons y<sup>e</sup> Father y<sup>e</sup> Son & y<sup>e</sup> Holy Ghost & y<sup>t</sup> we are by nature childr<sup>n</sup> of wrath & y<sup>t</sup> our hope of Mercy with God is only thro' y<sup>e</sup> righteousness of Jesus Christ apprehended by faith & we do freely give up ourselves to y<sup>e</sup> Lord to walke in communion with him in y<sup>e</sup> ordinances appointed in his holy word & to yield obedience to all his commands & submit to his governm<sup>t</sup> & whereas to y<sup>e</sup> great dishon<sup>r</sup> of God, Scandall of Religion & hazard of y<sup>e</sup> damnation of Souls, y<sup>e</sup> Sins of drunkenness & fornication are Prevailing amongst us we do Solemnly engage before God this day thro his grace faithfully and conscientiously to strive against those Evills and y<sup>e</sup> temptations that May lead thereto.—For text see "Church records, G. L. Walker, Hist. First Ch. in Hartford, Hartford, 1884, p. 248." Also given in Prof. Williston Walker's "Creeds and platforms," p. 121, note 1.

Concerning these last two Half-Way covenants Professor Walker says: "Like this Salem *Direction* the Hartford covenant was not formally adopted by the church, though prepared by its pastor and used by its services. For a century, at Hartford, each pastor wrote his own form."

A most interesting description of the manner in which Half-Way covenants were employed is given in a letter of Rev. Samuel Danworth, pastor of a church in Taunton, Massachusetts, of the date 1705. The letter reads in part:

It was a most comfortable Day the first of March, when we renew'd the Reformation Covenant. . . we added an Engagement to reform Idleness, unnecessary frequenting Houses of public Entertainment, irreverent Behaviour in Public Worship, Neglect of Family-Prayer, Promise-breaking, and walking with Slanderers and Reproachers of others; and that we should all in our Families be subject to good Orders and Government. It was read to the Breth-

ren and Sisters in the Forenoon; they standing up as an outward Sign of their inward Consent, to the rest of the Inhabitants. In the Afternoon they standing up also when it was read; and then every one that stood up, brought his Name ready writ in a Paper, and put into the Box, that it might be put on Church Record. . . We gave Liberty to all Men and Women Kind, from sixteen Years old and upwards to act with us; and had three hundred Names given in to list under Christ, against the Sins of the Times. . . We have a hundred more that will yet bind themselves in the Covenant, that were then detained from Meeting. Let GOD have the Glory.

Yesterday fourteen were propounded to the Church; some for full Communion; others for Baptism, being adult Persons.

The full text of the decisions of 1657 and 1662 is given in Prof. Walker's "Creeds and Platforms," pages 228-339. We need not quote them here. But we must record the failure of the Half-Way Covenant as a permanent instrument of organized Congregational church life. In general the Half-Way Covenants embodied virtually everything that ought to have been required for church membership. The vice of the system was in the countenance it gave to a half-way relationship between Christ and the world. Men and women who ought to have come into church membership, and whom the churches ought somehow to have reached, remained in a sort of left-handed relationship as members, not yet members, and were content. The evil did not tend to its own readjustment. The great awakening, which began with the preaching of Whitfield and Jonathan Edwards, had as one of its chief results the abrogation of the Half-Way Covenant. This is not the place to discuss at length its merits and defects, but only to record in its relation to the general history of the church covenant in our Congregational churches the character and conclusion of this unsuccessful experiment.

It has often been assumed that Jonathan Edwards was opposed to and by his opposition destroyed the Half-Way Covenant. That system was indeed destroyed by the great awakening which grew out of the preaching of Jonathan Edwards; but Dr. Dexter shows plainly that Edwards himself administered the Half-Way Covenant, and probably would

have continued to employ it without any strong feeling of disapproval, had that been the only difficulty encountered by him in the church life of his times. Dr. Dexter refers to Edwards' covenant administered to all members of his congregation above fourteen years of age. It fills four closely printed octavo pages and contains 1568 words (Dexter, Congregationalism, p. 487). The only defect which a modern Congregationalist can possibly discover in this covenant is that it resulted in taking the covenanter only half-way.

## IX. THE VALUE OF THE COVENANT

This volume undertakes to assemble all the general confessions of faith of the Congregational Churches that have any present claim to authority, together with such account of past confessions as shall set the present forth in true historic perspective; and also to gather representative covenants adopted by or employed in representative churches of our order from the beginning of modern Congregational history. But this is not its whole purpose. It is the author's hope that he may be able to set forth somewhat more clearly than is sometimes understood the historic and proper relation of creed and covenant within the local church and the denomination. We shall have present occasion to discuss and record creeds, and need not at this point make particular mention of them; but this book undertakes to show that Congregational churches are not founded upon creeds, however useful creeds may be to them, and would be entirely complete without creeds, but that the basis of church organization among us is the covenant. To this end we may well go back to the fathers, and quote from a number of them, to make this thesis clear.

The covenant, was held by all the early Congregational writers to be that which constitutes a church, and a person a member of a Christian church. They held that it ought to be explicit, but might be implied. The advocates both of a national and a catholic visible church accused the Congregationalists of unwarrantable strictness on this point. Thomas Goodwin, in his Letters to John Goodwin, says: "The church covenant is no more with us than this,—an agreement and resolution, professed with promise to walk in all those ways pertaining to this fellowship, so far as they shall be revealed

to them in the gospel. Thus briefly and indefinitely and implicitly, and in such like words and no other, do we apply ourselves to men's consciences, not obtruding upon them the mention of any one particular before or in admission, . . . leaving their spirits free to the entertainment of the light that shines or shall shine on them and us out of the word." (p. 44). Daniel Buck, a member of the church organized in London in 1592, declared, on his arraignment before three magistrates, that when he came into the congregation "he made this protestation, that he would walk with the rest of the congregation, so long as they would walk in the way of the Lord, and so far as might be warranted by the word of God." (Punehard's History, 277-8.) Burton, in his Rejoinder to Prynne's Answer concerning the Twelve Considerable Questions, maintains that it is enough that there be a covenant either expressed or implied. John Cotton shows that a covenant may be "by silent consent, Gen. xvii. 2; by express words, Ex. xix. 8; or by writing and sealing, Neh. ix. 38." Cotton Mather says, that, in an Apology of Justin Martyr, we find Christians, who were admitted into church fellowship, agreeing in a resolution to conform in all things to the word of God; which seems to be as truly a church covenant as any in the churches of New England. In the organization of the Salem Church, Mr. Higginson drew up a covenant and confession of faith; and those who were afterward admitted were required "to enter into a like covenant-engagement as to the *substance*, but the *manner* was to be so ordered by the elders as to be most conducive to the end, *respect being always had by them to the LIBERTY and ability* of the person."—(Neal's Puritans, i. 300.) Congregationalism as contained in the Scriptures, &c. quotes from Hooker's Survey, part. i. 46: "This covenant may be either explicit or implicit; explicit where there is a formal covenant, implicit where they practise without a verbal written formal covenant." This covenant, he maintains, is for life as essentially as is the marriage-covenant. Prince quotes Gov. Brad-

ford: "Upon which these people shake off their antichristian bondage, and, as the Lord's free people, join themselves by covenant in a church state, to walk in all his ways, made known or *to be made known to them*, according to their best endeavors, whatever it cost them." Thus it seems that covenants were originally the basis of Congregational church organizations, and that with regard to the *substance*, and not the words of them. Many of the old writers, particularly Goodwin, show that a covenant, expressed or implied, is absolutely necessary to the establishment of any society whatever.

It was the united opinion of the early Congregationalists, that any number of persons, united together by a covenant either expressed or implied, for the worship of God, constitute a church. John Robinson says: "And for the gathering of a church I do tell you, that in what place soever, whether by preaching the gospel by a true minister, by a false minister, by no minister, or by reading and conference, or by any other means of publishing it, two or three faithful people do arise, separating themselves from the world into the fellowship of the gospel, they are a church truly gathered, though never so weak." (Works, ii, 232.) In his Apology he defines a church to be a company of faithful, holy people, with their seed, called by the word of God into a public covenant with Christ, and among themselves, for mutual fellowship, in the use of all the means of God's glory and their salvation. (Works, iii, 427.) The Saint's Apology says, this consent or agreement ought to be explicit, for the well-being, but not necessarily for the being, of a true church; for it may be implied by frequent acts of communion, &c. (Hanbury, ii, 73). Jacob's Church Confession says: "They (the English congregations) are a true political church, as they are a company of visible Christians, united, by their own consent, to serve God, . . . therefore we commune with them upon occasion." (Hanbury, i, 296.) Euring says: "Search the Scriptures, and you shall find that every true visible church of Christ must consist of a company of peo-

ple separated from the froward generation of the world by the gospel, and joined or built together into a holy communion and fellowship among themselves.”—Answer to Ten Counter Demands, Hanbury, ii. 367.

In Burton’s Modest Answer to Prynne’s Full Reply in 1645, it is shown that a mere implicit covenant is sufficient to the being, though not to the well-being, of a church (p. 9). Thomas Goodwin argues, that a church is “a holy nation, . . . a household of faith, . . . a holy temple,” and thus is an organized body; and that it is an instituted body, assembling in one place, built by a special covenant. In his Catechism he shows that the ancient converts *joined* themselves to the church, and that a covenant is implied in their authority to judge and discipline their members, as they have no power to “judge them that are without.” The Confession of the Low Country Exiles, art. xxxiii., says: “Christians are willingly to join together in Christian communion and orderly covenant; and, by free confession of the faith and obedience of Christ, to unite themselves into peculiar and visible congregations.” John Davenport says in his “Power of Congregational churches:” “The Church of Christ arises from the coadunion or knitting together of many saints into one by a holy covenant, whereby they, as lively stones, are built into a spiritual house (1 Pet. ii. 4, 5). Though church covenant be common to all churches in its general nature, yet there is a special combination which gives a peculiar being to one Congregational church and its members, distinct from all others.”—See also, for corroboration of the same sentiments, Burrough’s Irenicum, in Han. iii. 115; Bartlett’s Model, in ib. 239; Savoy Declaration, in ib. 545, 546; Camb. Platform, chap. 2, sect. 6, and chap. 4; Wise’s Vindication, chap. 2; Lord King’s Enquiry, part i. 3, 7; Hooker’s Survey, part i. 46; Hutchinson’s Hist. Mass. 370, 371; Hall’s Puritans, 294; S. Mather’s Apology, 2; Increase Mather’s Dis. Ecc. Councils, preface; Owen’s Complete Works, xix. 213, 505, and xx. 370,

371; Watt's Works, iii. 198, 250; Cotton Mather's Rat. Dis. 10, 11; Eaton's and Taylor's Defence, 44; Letchford's Plain Dealing, epistle to the reader; Dwight, Serm. cxlix.; Emmons, v. 444-446; and Principles of Church Order by the Congregational Union of England and Wales, art. i. in Hanbury, iii. 599.

Mr. Champlin Burrage published in 1910 an interesting pamphlet entitled "New Facts Concerning John Robinson," including the results of his research in English university libraries and in the British Museum. It is interesting that in this as in his previously known writings the pastor of the Pilgrims stands firmly on the covenant as the basis of church organization. He says,—

"Every true Church of God is joined with Him in holy covenant by voluntary profession to have Him the God thereof, and be his people."

## X. COVENANTS OLD AND NEW

The preceding chapters have contained the text of a number of the older covenants. It will be interesting and instructive to assemble here some representative covenants from the early New England churches in such order as will show their evolution. Those before the Unitarian Controversy were nearly all destitute of doctrinal matter; those from 1810 to 1883 generally included some credal material, and often involved in addition a more or less formal assent to the longer creed of the local church. The two forms of admission prepared in 1883 and 1895 established a new line of demarcation, and the covenants of recent years may be studied in the examples here gathered, which are fairly representative.

### THE PILGRIM COVENANT

The Church of the Pilgrims, 1602.

The Plymouth Church, gathered at Gainsboro in 1602, and organized under covenant at Schooby in 1606, declared that its members

As ye Lord's free people, joynd themselves (by a covenant of the Lord) into a church estate, in ye fellowship of ye gospell, to walk in all his wayes, made known or to be made known unto them, according to their best endeavors, whatever it should cost them, the Lord assisting them.

### THE FIRST CHURCH OF SALEM, 1629

We covenant with the Lord and with one another, and do bind ourselves in the presence of God to walk together in all his ways, according as He is pleased to reveal Himself unto us in his blessed Word of Truth.

Covenants tended to lengthen, as in the case of the Salem church, to which came in 1636 Rev. Hugh Peter as minister. He had been accustomed to a much longer covenant in Rotterdam, and he rewrote the Salem covenant, but it will be noted that its added length included matter relating not to doctrine but to life.

THE RENEWED SALEM COVENANT OF 1636

Gather my Saints together unto me that have made a Covenant with me by sacrifice. Ps. 50: 5.

Wee whose names are here under written, members of the present Church of Christ in Salem, having found by sad experience how dangerous it is to sitt loose to the Covenant wee make with our God: and how apt wee are to wander into by pathes, even to the loosing of our first aimes in entering into Church fellowship: Doe therefore solemnly in the presence of the Eternall God, both for our own comforts, and those which shall or maye be joynd unto us, renewe that Church Covenant we find this Church bound unto at theire first beginning, viz: That We Covenant with the Lord and one with an other; and doe bynd our selves in the presence of God, to walke together in all his waies, according as he is pleased to reveale himself unto us in his Blessed word of truth. And doe more explicitly in the name and feare of God, profess and protest to walke as followeth through the power and grace of our Lord Jesus.

1 first wee avowe the Lord to be our God, and our selves his people in the truth and simplicitie of our spirits.

2 We give our selves to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the word of his grace, fore the teaching, ruleing and sanctifyeing of us in matters of worship, and Conversation, resolveing to cleave to him alone for life and glorie; and oppose all contrarie wayes, canons and constitutions of men in his worship.

3 Wee promise to walke with our brethren and sisters in this Congregation with all watchfullnes and tendernes, avoyding all jelousies, suspitions, backbyteings, censurings, provoakings, secrete risings of spirite against them; but in all offences to follow the rule of the Lord Jesus, and to beare and forbear, give and forgive as he hath taught us.

4 In publick or in private, we will willingly doe nothing to the offence of the Church but will be willing to take advise for our selves and ours as occasion shalbe presented.

5 Wee will not in the Congregation be forward eyther to shew oure owne gifts or parts in speaking or scrupling, or there discover the fayling of oure brethren or sisters butt attend an orderly cale there unto; knowing how much the Lord may be dishonoured, and his Gospell in the profession of it, sleighted, by our distempers, and weaknesses in publyck.

6 Wee bynd our selves to studdy the advancement of the Gospell in all truth and peace, both in regard of those that are within,

or without, noe way sleighting our sister Churches, but using there Counsell as need shalbe: nor laying a stumbling block before any, noe not the Indians, whose good we desire to promote, and soe to converse, as we may avoyd the verrey appearance of evill.

7 We hearbye promise to carrye our selves in all lawfull obedience, to those that are over us, in Church or Commonweale, knowing how well pleasing it will be to the Lord, that they should have encouragement in their places, by our not grelveing theyre spirites through our Irregularities.

8 Wee resolve to approve our selves to the Lord in our perticular calings, shunning ydleness as the bane of any state, nor will wee deale hardly, or oppressingly with any, wherein we are the Lord's stewards:

9 alsoe promyseing to our best abiltie to teach our children and servants, the knowledg of God and his will, that they may serve him also; and all this, not by any strength of our owne, but by the Lord Christ, whose bloud we desire may sprinkle this our Covenant made in his name.—The Covenant Idea, pp. 89-91.

The First Church of Boston had a covenant somewhat longer, chiefly in its recital of certain events connected with their migration across the ocean:

#### THE CHARLESTOWN-BOSTON COVENANT, JULY 30, 1630

In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, & in Obedience to His holy will & Divine Ordinaunce.

Wee whose names are herevnder written, being by His most wise, & good Providence brought together into this part of America in the Bay of Massachusetts, & desirous to vnite our selves into one Congregation, or Church, vnder the Lord Jesus Christ our Head, in such sort as becometh all those whom He hath Redeemed, & Sanctified to Himselfe, do hereby solemnly, and religiously (as in His most holy Proesence) Promise, & bind ou<sup>r</sup>selves, to walke in all our wayes according to the Rule of the Gospell, & in all sincere Conformity to his holy Ordinaunces, & in mutuall love, & respect each to other, so neere as God shall give vs grace.—Text from A. B. Ellis's "History of the First Church in Boston," p. 3.

The Watertown covenant was longer yet, but not by the inclusion of doctrinal matter.

#### THE CENTER CHURCH OF HARTFORD, 1632

This covenant is presumably the one adopted by this Church on its organization in Newtown (now Cambridge,) Mass., in 1632.

Since it hath pleased God, in His infinite mercy, to manifest Himself willing to take unworthy sinners near unto Himself, even

into covenant relation to and interest in Him, to become a God to them and avouch them to be his people, and accordingly to command and encourage them to give up themselves and their children also unto Him.

We do therefore this day, in the presence of God, His holy angels, and this assembly, avouch the Lord Jehovah, the true, and living God, even God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, to be our God and give up ourselves and ours also unto Him, to be his subjects and servants, promising through grace and strength in Christ (without whom we can do nothing,) to walk in professed subjection to Him as our only Lord and Lawgiver, yielding universal obedience to his blessed will, according to what discoveries He hath made or hereafter shall make, of the same to us; in special, that we will seek Him in all His holy ordinances according to the rules of the Gospel, submitting to His government in this particular Church, and walking together therein, with all brotherly love, and mutual watchfulness, to the building up of one another in faith and love unto His praise: all which we promise to perform, the Lord helping us through His grace, in Jesus Christ.

#### THE SECOND CHURCH OF BOSTON, 1650

We, whose names are here subscribed, being called of God to enter into church-fellowship together, knowing and considering our great unworthiness and unfitness for so near approaches to so holy a God, and how apt we are to start aside from him and from the rules of his gospel and government over us, we therefore lament as in His sight, the inconstancy of our own spirits with Him, and our former neglects of Him and pollutions of His house and holy things, by our personal corruptions and unholy walkings, and do beseech Him, for His name's sake, to prevent us with mercy and accept us under the wings of His own everlasting covenant; and in dependence upon His free grace therein, in His name and strength, we here freely this day, in the presence of the ever-living God, do avouch the Lord our God to be our God, and ourselves to be His people, and to yield ourselves to Him by an holy covenant of faith and love and covenant, to cleave to Him and to one another in Him; to cleave to God in Christ as our sovereign Good, and to the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Mediator and surety of the covenant, as our only High Priest and atonement to satisfy for us and to save us, and as our only prophet to guide and to teach us, and as our only king and law-giver to reign over us; as also to attend upon Him and the service of His holy will, by walking together as a congregation and church of Christ, in all the ways of His worship, and of mutual love, and of special watchfulness one over another, according to His will, which is to be revealed to us by His word; subjecting ourselves to the Lord in all his holy administrations in His church, beseeching Him to own us for His people, and to delight to dwell among us as His people, that His kingdom and grace may be advanced by us.

Which sacred covenant that we may observe and all the branches of it inviolable forever, we desire to deny ourselves and to defend

alone upon the power of his Spirit, and upon the merits and mercies of the Lord Jesus Christ, for assistance and for acceptance, for healing and forgiving mercy for His own sake.

THE OLD SOUTH COVENANT, 1669

The third Congregational Church to be organized in Boston was the Old South. It was "gathered at Charlestown on the 12th day of third month, 1669." The basis of union as is elaborately set forth by its historian, Hamilton A. Hill, "was not a formal express of doctrinal belief, but of a glowing obligation of covenant obligation."—History of Old South, i, 126. It is somewhat longer than the earlier covenants, but its added length is not made up of doctrinal material; it enlarges upon the solemnity of this "everlasting covenant" and especially upon its inclusion of their posterity and the relation of sisterly fellowship and communion with other churches. Exclusive of these interesting and valuable additions, the covenant itself, constituting the church and defining the relation existing between its members, one with another and with their Lord, is as follows:

We, whose names are underwritten, being called of God to join together into a Church in heart-sense of our unworthiness thereof, disability thereunto, and aptness to forsake the Lord, cast off His government and neglect our duty one to another; Do in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, trusting only in His grace and help, solemnly bind ourselves together as in the presence of God,

Constantly to walk together as a Church of Christ, according to all those holy rules of God's word, given to a church body rightly established, so far as we already know them, or they shall be hereafter farther made known to us.

In 1680, Mr. Willard, who at that time was pastor, enlarged upon the covenant, adding to it matter suggested by the Reforming Synod, but introducing no doctrinal material. The two forms of this covenant are given in full in Hill's History of the Old South, Vol. 1, pp. 127, 240-241.

In 1769, Rev. Samuel Blair, following the frequent custom of a new pastor to prepare his own covenant, introduced into

the Old South a form of admission of members, which included into it a brief statement of doctrine. Of this Mr. Hill says in his history,

“This form seems to us very inferior in power and fervency of expression to the covenant, which had been in use in the church for 100 years. It embodies the nearest approach to a doctrinal statement, as a prerequisite to admission to membership which was ever adopted at the Old South. The statement is very guarded and qualified in its terms, but it was all that the brethren were willing to consent to, as a concession to Mr. Blair, and it continued in force just 8 months.”

—Vol. 2, page 96.

So far as we are aware, this is the only important attempt that was made to introduce doctrinal terms into a Congregational covenant until the time of the Unitarian controversy.

#### DR. DEXTER'S COVENANT

The covenant recommended by Dr. H. M. Dexter was based on that of the Old South Church, whose general scope he followed, and some of whose clauses he included :

We, who are called of God to join ourselves into a Church state, in deep sense of our unworthiness thereof, disability thereto, and aptness to forsake the Lord, and neglect our duty to him and to each other, do hereby—in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, and trusting in his gracious help—solemnly covenant and agree, with Him and with each other, to walk together as a Church of Christ, according to all those holy rules of God's Word given to a Church rightly established, so far as we know them, or may gain further light upon them. And, particularly, we covenant and agree:—

To consecrate ourselves, our offspring, our worldly goods, and all that we have, and are, unto the Triune God, as the supreme object of our love and our chosen portion, for this world, and for that which is to come;

To give diligent heed to His word and ordinances;

To maintain His worship in the family;

To seek in all things His glory, and the good of men, and to endeavor to live a holy and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty;

To contribute from our substance, and by our active labors and continual prayers, to the work of this Church;

To submit to its Gospel discipline;  
To labor for its growth, and peace, and purity;  
To walk with each other in Christian fidelity and tenderness;

And, finally, to hold and promote suitable fellowship with all sister churches of the common Head, especially with those among whom the Lord hath set us, that the Lord may be one, and his name one, in all his churches throughout all generations, to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus.

And now the good Lord be merciful unto us, pardoning, according to the riches of his grace, as all our past sins, so especially our Church sins, in negligence and unfaithfulness of former vows, and accept, as a sweet savor in Christ Jesus, this our offering up of ourselves unto him in this work; filling this place with his glory, making us faithful to himself and to each other so long as this transitory life shall last, and, after that he has kept us from falling, presenting us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. Amen!—Congregationalism, pp. 163, 4.

Covenants in present use in our Congregational churches show no very striking divergences. A large number of churches use the form of admission which accompanied the Creed of 1883, and a still larger number the revised form of 1895 which was printed in "The Council Manual." Among the churches employing this covenant in one of its two forms, or in some unimportant modification if it, are Shawmut Church, Boston, Calvinistic Church, Fitchburg, Mass.; First Church, Newton Center, Mass.; Central Church, Galesburg, Illinois; First Church, Muskegon, Michigan; First Church, Ottumwa, Iowa; First Church, Marietta, Ohio; First Church, Long Beach, California. These are representative churches in a much larger group.

Of the pastors who employ this covenant, and who have expressed their opinion in a recent symposium, none find any serious fault with this covenant, or express any great enthusiasm concerning it. It is a servicable covenant, but it was hastily prepared and perfunctorily revised, and it has never elicited any very warm praise or strong criticism. The two forms are here given, and also a number of other forms of covenant in present use in representative churches in different parts of the country.

## (THE FORM OF ADMISSION OF 1883.)

The following is the "Confession of Faith" which the Commission of 1883 prepared to accompany the Creed which they had prepared:

## CONFESSION OF FAITH

What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people.

Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father, which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father, which is in heaven.

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Dearly beloved, called of God to be his children through Jesus Christ our Lord, you are here that, in the presence of God and his people, you may enter into the fellowship and communion of his Church. You do truly repent of your sins; you heartily receive Jesus Christ as your crucified Saviour and risen Lord; you consecrate yourselves unto God and your life to his service; you accept his Word as your law, and his Spirit as your comforter and guide; and trusting in his grace to confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, you promise to do God's holy will, and to walk with this church in the truth and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Accepting, according to the measure of your understanding of it, the system of Christian truth held by the churches of our faith and order, and by this church into whose fellowship you now enter, you join with ancient saints, with the Church throughout the world, and with us, your fellow-believers, in humbly and heartily confessing your faith in the gospel, saying:—

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried: the third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven; and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

[Then should baptism be administered to those who have not been baptized. Then should those rise who would unite with the church by letter. To them the minister should say:]

Confessing the Lord whom we unitedly worship, you do now renew your self-consecration, and join with us cordially in this, our Christian faith and covenant.

[The members of the church present should rise.]

We welcome you into our fellowship. We promise to watch over you with Christian love. God grant that, loving and being

loved, serving and being served, blessing and being blessed, we may be prepared, while we dwell together on earth, for the perfect communion of the saints in heaven.

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

[An alternative benediction, Jude 24, 25.]

(THE FORM OF ADMISSION OF 1895.)

Following is the revised form of the "Confession of Faith" of 1883 which was prepared in 1895 and printed, by direction of the National Council, in "The Council Manual."

#### FORM FOR THE RECEPTION OF MEMBERS

From the Council Manual (approved by the National Council of 1895.)

The persons to be received on confession of their faith coming, as their names are called, before the congregation, the minister may repeat the following or other Scripture passages:

"What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all His people."

"Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

The minister shall then say:

Dearly beloved, called of God to be His children, through Jesus Christ, we give hearty thanks to Him, who by His Spirit, has opened your eyes to see and your hearts to receive Jesus as your Saviour and Lord, and who has inclined to present yourselves at this time to make confession of Him.

With the saints of old, with the Church throughout the world, and with us, your fellow-believers, you join humbly and heartily confessing your faith in the Gospel, saying:

(The members of the Church, together with those to be received, here rise and repeat the Apostles' Creed.)

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven; and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

(The members of the Church will again be seated.)

Thus confessing with us and with the Church universal your Christian faith, in the presence of God and of His people, you publicly enter into His covenant of grace.

Having truly repented of your sins and heartily forsaken them, you devote yourselves to the love, obedience, and service of Jesus Christ; you take His Word as the law of your life and the Holy Spirit as your Comforter and Guide; and trusting in His grace to confirm and strengthen you, you promise to follow Him in all things, to walk with His disciples in love, and to live for His glory. Do you so promise?

Response, I do.

Those who have been previously baptized are addressed as follows:

Do you who are children of the covenant now accept for yourselves the seal of baptism into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, to which faith and love brought you in childhood?

Response, I do.

The God of all grace, who hath called you unto his eternal glory by Jesus Christ, confirm you unto the end that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Those who have not been previously baptized are thus addressed:

Acknowledging the divine authority of Christian baptism, you now receive it as a sign of the washing of regeneration, which you trust has been wrought in you by the Holy Spirit, and as a seal of God's covenanted grace.

Baptism should here be administered as follows:

I baptize thee into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Minister shall then say:

And now to you who are faithful to these solemn promises and engagements towards God, He is pleased to declare by His Word His promises and engagements towards you, assuring to you the free and full forgiveness of your sins; and pledging all sufficient aid, upon which you may joyfully rely, in the great work which you have undertaken. He promises that he will be your God, your Father, your Redeemer, your Sanctifier, Teacher, and Guide. He covenants with you, that in the day of trial and temptation he will cheer and strengthen you; that he will cause all things to work together for your good; that nothing shall separate you from his love; and that at death your ascended Lord will receive you to himself, that where He is there you may be also.

Those to be received by letter or certificate from other churches now either come forward or rise as their names are called. The Minister shall greet these, saying:

Kindred in Christ, who come acknowledging the vows you made when first you declared your faith in Christ, we bid you welcome. We greet you as fellow-laborers in His service, and fellow-travelers to His promised rest.

Addressing all those entering into the membership of this Church the Minister shall say:

Beloved in the Lord, baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, you have confessed the faith of Christ before witnesses and have given yourself to God in His everlasting covenant of grace. And now accepting, according to the measure of your understanding of it, the system of Christian truth held by the churches of our faith and order, and by this church into whose fellowship you now enter, you cordially unite yourself with the church of Christ, adopting as your own the covenant by which it exists; you promise to pray and labor for its edification and fruitfulness; to help in sustaining its worship, its activities, and its charities; and to live with us in Christian fellowship. Do you so promise.

Response, I do.

The members of the Church here rise, and the Minister shall say:

We, then, the members of this Church, do affectionately welcome you into this household of faith. We pledge to you our sympathy, our help, and our prayers that you may evermore increase in the knowledge and love of God. We trust that by His grace we may all walk worthy of the calling wherewith we are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. God grant that, loving and being loved, serving and being served, blessing and being blessed, we may be prepared while we dwell together on earth for the perfect fellowship of the saints above.

Here the minister may give to each the hand of fellowship, with some appropriate passage of Scripture; after which may be pronounced the following benediction:

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

The two forms of admission prepared to accompany the Creed of 1883, while embodying excellent features, are not above criticism in several particulars. Both are virtually covenants, but neither one consistently develops the covenant idea. The earlier one, hastily prepared as an after-thought by the Commission whose chief duty had been the formulation of the Creed, was called a Confession of Faith. The other, prepared in 1895, was taken over by the Committee on the Manual and appears to have been an incident in the work of that Committee which had taken over the partially formulated result of another Committee appointed especially to prepare

a Form of Admission, while therefore the Council Manual of 1895 included the familiar form of admission, which certainly is a covenant, the second article of the Constitution which that Manual contains, includes a covenant, as follows:

The covenant by which this Church exists as a distinct body, and which every member accepts, is as follows:

Acknowledging Jesus Christ to be our Saviour and Lord, and accepting the Holy Scriptures as our rule of faith and practice, and recognizing the privilege and duty of uniting ourselves for Christian fellowship, the enjoyment of Christian ordinances, the public worship of God, and the advancement of his kingdom in the world, we do now, in the sight of God and invoking his blessing, solemnly covenant with and agree with each other to associate ourselves to be a Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, as warranted by the Word of God.

We agree to maintain the institutions of the gospel, to submit ourselves to the orderly administration of the affairs of the Church, and to walk together in brotherly love.

And this we do depending upon the aid of our heavenly Father, who so loved the World that he gave his only begotten Son for our salvation, and of Jesus Christ, who hath redeemed us with his blood, and of the Holy Spirit our Comforter and Guide.—Barton's Congregational Manual, p. 231.)

This article states that every member of the church accepts the covenant, but there is no place in the form of admission of members where this covenant appears and the covenant to which members do assent is quite a different thing. This is certainly an infelicity. No church needs two covenants, one as a part of its Constitution, to which every member assents without knowing that he does so, and another as a its form of admission of members but which has no place in its Constitution.

There should be another form of admission, not only better than either of these, but one whose covenant is an integral part of the organic law of the church.

#### CENTRAL CHURCH, BOSTON.

Central church has no Creed and has recently omitted the Apostles' Creed which formerly was a part of its Service of Admission.

#### The Covenant

Before these, the members of this church, who do now renew their assent to this covenant, encompassed by that great cloud of

witnesses who have fought the good fight and kept the faith, and with God's help and comfort, you do now covenant and promise to give yourself to Him, to seek His way for your way, to make His will your own, to bear gladly and loyally all that is given you to bear. You do promise to take Jesus Christ as your Master, and to make it your honest effort to do each day as you think He would have you do. You do promise that you will study His words, and that you will earnestly strive so to walk in His Spirit that your life may not be controlled by the desires and passions of the flesh, but by the Holy Spirit of love and truth.

You do also promise, that so long as you continue in association with this church you will be loyal to its fellowship; that you will help those of your fellow-members who are weak; that, according to your strength and opportunity, you will support its work and its services; and finally, that you will strive with all your heart to save others from the power of evil in the world and in themselves, and to bring them to the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ.

Trusting in the promise of Christ that no one shall pluck you out of His hand, and in the power of His Holy Spirit to teach you and to help you, you thus promise. Do you?

#### Reception of Members

##### The Announcement

For those joining by confession of faith.

Dearly beloved: You have been baptized at the will of your parents into the life which is in Christ. You do now of your own will and choice come before this company of His followers to confess His name and to take upon your own lips the promise of fidelity to Him.

For those joining by letter.

Dearly beloved: You have been already received into the fellowship in the greater Church of Christ. May God so bless your association with this church that it may bring to you a new and fresh revelation of His love and truth, and that you, living and working among us, may enlarge the usefulness of this church and increase its power according to the measure of the gift which God hath given and shall give unto you. As a token of your reception into the full privilege of the membership of this church, I ask you to stand with the members of this church as they silently renew their pledge of fidelity to our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

Members of the church rise.

#### THE SECOND CHURCH IN NEWTON

(West Newton, Massachusetts.)

This church has no Creed. Following is its Service of Admission.

##### Address of Welcome

Dearly Beloved, we give hearty thanks to our Father in Heaven, who has led you to choose Jesus as your Leader and Master, and who has inclined you at this time to acknowledge Him, and to

enter upon the privileges and responsibilities of membership in His church.

### Confession

With us, and with the church throughout the world, you confess your faith in Jesus Christ our Lord, and declare your purpose to live hereafter as His loving and obedient servant; \*"to walk in all of His ways now known, or hereafter to be made known, to you, according to your best endeavor, the Lord assisting you;" and to seek to build up the kingdom of God and His righteousness in yourself and in others.

I do.

(Here baptism will be administered, after which those uniting by letter will rise.)

### Covenant

In accordance with your purpose to live a Christian life, you now heartily unite with this church, to share with us its work and worship; covenanting with God and with us to be loyal to it in all things, to attend (so far as possible) its appointed services, to guard its good name, to promote its usefulness and prosperity as God's instrument for the good of men, and to walk with us in love and faithfulness so long as your relations with us shall continue.

I do.

### Right Hand of Fellowship

(Here the Church will rise.)

We then, members of this church of Christ, receive you into our communion, and welcome you with joy to our fellowship. We promise to unite with you in Christian work and worship, to treat you with Christian love, and to exercise towards you the sympathy and counsel, the charity and helpfulness which become brethren in the household of our Father.

God grant that in mutual love, and abundant helpfulness to others, we may illustrate the doctrine of Christ our Saviour, and, so far as in us lies, cause the kingdom of God to come, and His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

In token of our confidence and sincerity, receive the right hand of fellowship.

### PIEDMONT CHURCH, WORCESTER

Piedmont Church in January 31. 1916, adopted new articles of faith and Covenant. The pastor, Dr. Bradley, furnishes the following statement:

"The New Articles of Faith and the Covenant were adopted by the Church by a unanimous vote. The thought was in many minds,

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\*From the covenant of the church at Scrooby, 1602.

and was expressed by several, that in adopting a new and briefer statement we are in no way saying that we do not believe the articles adopted in 1912 to be true. We do believe them to be true, and regard them as the most admirable statements we have ever seen of the points of doctrine with which they deal. Our reasons for adopting the briefer form are chiefly that the shorter articles lend themselves to use in our services, and especially our conviction that we should lay emphasis upon purpose and not opinion in receiving people into our Churches.

"Piedmont Church wishes to be tolerant enough, hospitable enough, true enough to the broad Spirit of Christ, who invited men to join Him in His work without inquiring minutely into their theological notions, to offer to men and women whose hearts respond to Christ and His ideal of service and helpfulness, though they may feel very unsure of any theological proposition, a hearty fellowship and a field of service. Our first question is not, 'Do you think straight?' but 'Do you want to help?' Surely any reasonable person who wishes to help forward the cause of Christ and the Church will now be unable to say, 'I do not join a Church because I do not believe its creed.' Most intellectual doubts and difficulties disappear when we busy ourselves with services of love and kindness."

#### Covenant

I believe in one Infinite and Eternal God, the Father of all mankind, the giver of every good and perfect gift, and the source of every noble thought and purpose.

I believe in Jesus Christ, who best reveals to us the nature and the will of our Heavenly Father.

I believe that it is our Heavenly Father's will that all men, everywhere, should love and serve each other as brothers.

I believe that the Holy Spirit is ever ready to help us in our strivings for Goodness and Truth, and in our efforts to advance the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

#### Creed

I heartily enter this Christian fellowship and solemnly covenant with its members to try daily to follow Jesus Christ and do the will of our Heavenly Father, to attend upon the services of this Church, support its work, uphold its faith and walk with its members in love.

#### ELIOT CHURCH, NEWTON, MASS.

#### Covenant

We confess the one only true and living God to be our God and Father; the Lord Jesus Christ to be our Redeemer; and the Holy Spirit to be our Sanctifier, Comforter, and Guide. We consecrate ourselves to the service of God in an everlasting Covenant, and promise through Divine assistance to walk according to His commandments.

We acknowledge this to be a true Church of our Lord Jesus Christ; and so long as we continue members of it, we promise to attend its ordinances of worship, to promote its purity and peace, to avoid error, to submit to the discipline which Christ has established in His Church, and to be kindly affectioned and faithful one to another.

The Lord grant us grace to be true to this our Covenant, and to glorify Him with the holiness which becometh His house forever. Amen.

### PARK CHURCH, SPRINGFIELD, MASS.

Adopted in 1904

#### Constitution of the Church

##### Preamble

As a Church of Jesus Christ, associated for the public worship of God and the service of mankind, we declare our fellowship with all those who love our Lord. We covenant together for mutual helpfulness in work and worship. We express our common faith, not as a result of complete knowledge or as a condition of fellowship, but to indicate our common apprehension of God's truth.

##### Covenant

As disciples of the Lord Jesus, relying upon his strength, we covenant with him and with each other to love God and to obey his law as far as he shall make it known to us; to forsake sin and to battle with the world, the flesh and the devil; to speak the truth in love, and to take thought for things honorable in the sight of all men; to endeavor to bring the Kingdom of God to the earth; and to glorify him in every word and deed.

As associates in the fellowship of this Church, we pledge ourselves to join in its work and worship according to the measure of our ability; to seek one another's welfare; to think and speak in charity; and to do good to each other and to all men as we have opportunity.

##### Creed

We confess our belief in one God, the Father Almighty, who has made and who maintains the heaven and the earth, and all that is therein. We believe that he is holy and loving, and that he desires men to know and love him. We believe that he has sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to bring light and life to the world, and that through the Holy Spirit he sends that light and life into the hearts of all who will receive him. We believe that men have been made in God's image to be God's sons, that they have wilfully and ignorantly turned away from their inheritance, and that peace between the holy God and sinful man can be made only by the cross of Jesus

Christ. We believe that Jesus, having risen from the dead and ascended into heaven, rules over the world and mediates between God and man; and that in his own time he shall come again to judge the world and to receive to himself those who have committed their lives to him. We believe that Jesus while on earth founded his Church to be a witness to him through the maintenance of worship, the preaching and teaching of his truth, and the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. We believe that the Church is entrusted with his work, and that it, like him, must go about doing good and endeavoring to make the Kingdom of God real on earth. We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments contain the records of God's dealing with men and his will for men's conduct; and that, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, they furnish the true standard of Christian life and thought.

#### NORTH CHURCH, SPRINGFIELD, MASS.

North Church has a brief confession of faith, liturgical in form, but does not use it in admission of members.

#### Covenant

In the presence of God and men you now avow the Lord Jehovah, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, to be your God. You take His word to be the law of your life, and, renouncing all sinful pleasures and all unholy calling, you consecrate your powers and your possessions to His service forever. To speak that which is true; to do that which is right; to be honest in your dealings with men; to be faithful in your duties to God—this is the life which, by God's grace, you mean to live.

With this Church you covenant to join in work and in worship; seeking not only to be ministered unto, but also to minister; doing good to all men as you have opportunity, especially to them who are of this household of faith. You promise to submit to its rules and its discipline; to maintain a prayerful spirit, and to honor your Christian calling by a life of piety toward God, and charity toward men.

Is this your promise?

Joyfully, then, do we, the members of this Church, receive you to our communion. We remember the new commandment of our Lord, and, in our converse with you, we will strive to obey it. To help you, as we can, in bearing your burdens; to give you, as you need, Christian counsel and sympathy; to lead you, if we may, in the way of life eternal; to be patient with you, and faithful to you if you go astray; to be jealous of your good name; to hold your peace and welfare as our own; to fulfill to you in all ways, so far as in us lies, the law of Christ our Lord,—this is our purpose and our promise, for which we humbly ask grace divine, that we may truly keep.

## SECOND CHURCH, WATERBURY, CONN.

## Articles of Faith

We believe in God, the Father and Ruler of us all.

We believe in Jesus Christ, His Son, as the supreme revelation of God.

We believe in the Holy Spirit of God, and that God by His Spirit comes into our hearts to restrain us from evil and to inspire us to goodness and truth.

We believe in the Scriptures in that they hold before us the path of highest duty and the highest hopes for this world and for the world to come.

We believe in the Church as a divinely appointed agency for fellowship and service.

We believe in the ultimate triumph of righteousness, the resurrection from the dead and the life everlasting.

## Covenant

You do now with true humility and with grateful trust in God publicly consecrate yourself to His worship and service. And you do promise, as far as lies within your power, to submit to the government of this church, to love and watch over its members, to attend its worship, uphold its discipline, and promote its purity, peace and growth.

Do you so covenant with God and this church?

Those who are to be received by letter may now present themselves. (The minister shall read their names.)

Having previously consecrated yourself to the Kingdom of God, and to His worship and service, and desiring now to enter into special relation with this church, you do promise to seek its peace, purity and prosperity. Do you thus engage?

(The members of this church will rise.)

We then, the members of this church, do most cordially receive you into our communion and fellowship. In the name of our common Lord we welcome you to the blessings of His covenant, to the duties and privileges and joys of His Church. We promise to walk with you in Christian love and service, that the Kingdom of God may be established in the hearts of men.

## FIRST CHURCH, JACKSON, MICHIGAN

## Covenant

Will you enter into covenant with the members of this Church in an endeavor to express in their individual and corporate life the spirit of Christ, pledging loyalty to Him, his teachings, and His way of life? Will you work with the members of this Church to extend His kingdom in the world? Will you support the spiritual, educational, financial, benevolent and social interests of this Church;

laboring and praying for its increase, its purity and peace, and seek to make it a power for good?

Answer: I will.

Here the members of the Church will rise, and the minister will say:

We, then, the members of this Church, extend to you a Christian welcome and do heartily receive you into the fellowship of this Church. We desire to share with you its inheritances and vision, its responsibilities and privileges, its sacrifices and rewards. We pledge to you a Christian sympathy and concern; we promise to walk with you in the way of loving service; to be patient with you and faithful to you; to be jealous of your good name; to hold your peace and welfare as our own and thus fulfill a Christian fellowship.

#### EUCLID AVENUE CHURCH, CLEVELAND

The Euclid Avenue Church has the Kansas City Creed, and employs the following Covenant:

"You do now in the presence of God and men, accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Master, solemnly dedicate yourselves and all you are to the service of God. You do covenant that by the grace of God assisting you, you will love and serve Him all your lives; that you will glorify Him by following Jesus in promoting the temporal and spiritual good of men; that you will strive to obey the inward voice of the Spirit, and speak and do whatever is right and true and holy, so far as you perceive truth."

Do you thus covenant?

#### NEW ENGLAND CHURCH, CHICAGO

##### Covenant

You, now, in the presence of God, angels and men, do acknowledge the Lord Jehovah to be your God. You confess the Father to be your Father; the Son to be your Savior; the Holy Ghost to be your Sanctifier.

You take God's Word to be the guide of your life; and, renouncing the dominion of this world, you consecrate both soul and body unto the service of God, promising, by His help, to keep your consecration unto the end.

[Those uniting by Letter will here rise.]

You, who, in the fellowship of the saints, have come to us from other Churches of our Lord, do covenant with this Church to join in its ordinances and public worship; to submit to its rules and discipline; to strive for its purity and peace.

You will walk with its members in love and faithfulness, as long as you shall continue among them.

Thus you covenant.

[The Church will here rise.]

We, then, the members of this Church of Christ, do joyfully receive you. We welcome you to our communion and fellowship. We

promise to you our sympathies, our watchfulness, our prayers. We greet you as members with us of the spiritual body of Christ. We unite with you in the acknowledgement of one Lord, one faith, one baptism. And may God enable us all to be true to each other, and to the brotherhood and charity of the saints, and to Himself forever.

#### FIRST CHURCH, ROGERS PARK, CHICAGO

##### The Covenant

Dearly beloved, called of God to be His children through Jesus Christ our Lord, you are here that, in the presence of God and His people, you may enter into the fellowship and communion of His church. You do truly repent of your sins: you heartily receive Jesus Christ as your crucified Savior and Lord: you consecrate yourselves unto God, and your life to His service: you accept His word as your law, and His Spirit as your Comforter and Guide: and trusting in His grace to confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, you promise to do God's Holy Will, and to walk with this church in the truth and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You do cordially join yourselves to this church, engaging to submit to its government and discipline: to promote its purity, peace and edification: to walk with its members in the spirit of Christian love, and to discharge all those duties whereby God may be glorified and the Kingdom of His dear Son promoted and established among men.

##### Affirmation of Candidate

We unite with you in church fellowship, believing that thus we shall the better honor God, strengthen God's children, encourage the God-like in all our fellow men, and build up a spiritual kingdom in our own hearts and in the world.

We promise, as God gives us ability, to sustain by our presence, our prayers and our offerings, all the public services of the church, and to labor with you in extending Christian influence.

##### Response of the Church

We welcome you into our fellowship. We promise to watch over you with Christian love. God grant that, loving and being loved, serving and being served, blessing and being blessed, we may be prepared, while we dwell together on earth, for the perfect communion of the saints in Heaven.

May the Lord be gracious unto us, and bring us into His presence.

#### PLYMOUTH CHURCH, DES MOINES, IOWA

Plymouth Church has the Kansas City Confession, to which assent is not required .

## Order for the Reception of Members

Dearly Beloved, you are here in the presence of God and His people that you may enter into the communion and fellowship of His Church. We believe in God as our Father and in Jesus Christ as our teacher and Saviour. Together we are striving to learn the meaning of life and to walk as becometh the children of God.

In coming into membership in the Church we are recognizing your right. We are confirming you in the privileges and opportunities of the Church. It is your Church and we are Christian friends. We want to help you to become strong and true in the Christian faith. As Christians you are to learn the meaning of right and wrong, your duty to God, the helpfulness of prayer, the joy of unselfishness and the meaning of Christ's teaching. This should be your aim.

Do you promise to be faithful to the Church and strive to learn the ways of Christ, that you may know what your duties to God and men are?

## Response of the Church

We then, the members of this Church, receive you with joy into our fellowship and communion, and we promise to walk with you in Christian love and sympathy. God grant that loving and being loved, serving and being served, blessing and being blessed, we may know the fullest joys of Christian fellowship.

## FIRST CHURCH, DETROIT

Dearly beloved, called of God to His children through Jesus Christ our Lord, you are here that in the presence of God and His people you may enter into the fellowship and communion of His Church. You do truly repent of your sins; you heartily receive Jesus Christ as your Crucified Saviour and Risen Lord; you consecrate yourself unto God and your lives to His service; you accept His word as your law, and His spirit as your comforter and guide; and, trusting in His grace to confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, you promise to do God's holy will and to walk with this Church in the truth and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You covenant with us that you will be loyal to the interests of this Church, as long as you remain members of it, that you will share in its services as God shall give you strength, that you will give for its support and missionary work, as God shall prosper you, and that you will co-operate in its work in such manner as you may be able, to the end that we may together serve Him who is the Head of the Church, and that the Kingdom of God may come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

## Welcome by the Church

We welcome you into our fellowship. We promise to watch over you with Christian love. God grant that, loving and being

loved, serving and being served, blessing and being blessed, we may be prepared while we dwell together on earth for the perfect communion of the saints in heaven.

### FIRST CHURCH, DENVER, COLORADO

#### Covenant

We promise to co-operate with the members of this church in the study and practice of that law which Christ taught as supreme: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself."

### PILGRIM CHURCH, ST. LOUIS

Pilgrim Church uses with some modification the form of admission of 1895, and adds this:

#### Covenant of Christian Discipleship

Recognizing that the Kingdom of God is not in word but in deed, we ask you before God and man to accept severally and individually, the covenant under which we are all living and laboring together:

(The new members will repeat together with the Pastor)

Looking to God in his loving kindness to guide by his light and to empower by his grace, I hereby take the Lord Jesus Christ to be my Master, consecrating to Him and to his service all that I am and all that I have; promising that I will make it the supreme purpose of my life to grow into his likeness and to do his works of love.

That I may cultivate the life of faith and be fitted for the largest service, I hereby promise to search the Scriptures; to maintain the life of prayer; and to devote myself in all the activities of my life to bring in the Kingdom of God.

#### The Covenant with this Church

You promise to magnify the privilege of the fellowship into which you this day enter; to hold the name of this church dear; to avoid anything which may bring reproach upon its honor; regularly to attend its services; cheerfully to contribute, according to your ability, to its support; generously to aid it in the extension of the Kingdom of Christ, and at all times and in all places to endeavor so to conduct yourself that your life shall promote its efficiency, purity and peace.

Do you thus promise?

Response—I do.

## The Welcome into Fellowship

(Here the members of the church will rise)

We, then, the members of this church, joyfully receive you into our communion, promising to walk with you in Christian love as members of the Household of the Faith; to help you in bearing your burdens; to promote your welfare as far as in us lies; and to fulfill to you the law of Christ our Lord; praying that while we dwell together here we may be prepared for the perfect fellowship of the life eternal. God grant that we may be faithful to this covenant.

## FIRST CHURCH, LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

## Reception of Members

You are now to enter into covenant with God and His people. You take God the Father to be your God; you take Jesus Christ His Son to be your Savior and Teacher and Lord; you take the Holy Spirit to be your Guide; you take the Word of God to be your rule of faith and duty and the people of God to be your brethren. And you promise in humble dependence upon divine help that you will strive to live a life of service and of love, seeking to become like Jesus Christ and to advance His Kingdom in the world, studying day by day the Bible and seeking communion with God in prayer. Do you thus believe and promise?

Answer, I do.

The Members of the Church Unite in this Response:

We, the members of this church, do affectionately welcome you into our household of faith. We pledge to you our sympathy, our help and our prayers that you may evermore increase in the knowledge and love of God. By His grace may we all walk worthy of the calling wherewith we were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering forbearing one another in love, giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Living and dying may we be the Lord's. And at last may we, more than conquerors through Him that hath loved us, find entrance into the church above where our fellowship shall be unbroken and our joy forever full.

## PLYMOUTH CHURCH, DENVER

Plymouth employs a personal covenant, signed by each member. This was arranged especially for young people, who retain a duplicate of the card signed.

I accept thankfully God's great love to me. It is my sincere desire and purpose to give Him my heart; to love Him, to please Him and to give my life to Him.

I acknowledge the need of the help and guidance of Christ. And I take Him to be my Personal Friend, my Saviour from sin and the King of my heart and my life.

I mean, God helping me, to live a Christian life daily and always; to pray each day for God's guidance and help; to live in friendliness and helpfulness with those about me; to be faithful in my work, whatever it is; and to keep my heart and my life pure.

I wish to be useful. I mean to use my influence for Christ and to be known as His disciple. And it is my purpose to become a member of His Church, for the sake of my own Christian growth and my larger usefulness.

#### THE FIRST CHURCH, KANSAS CITY, MO.

(This church has the Dayton Creed, but consent to this Covenant is the only requirement for admission to membership in this church.)

Believing in the life and love of service as set forth in the work and teachings of Jesus, in the Church as an organized force in the world, the purpose of which is to win men to Christ and to save them for this world and the world to come, I cordially connect myself with this church in a direct and special union, engaging to submit to its rules of government and discipline, to attend in so far as possible its ordinances of worship; to contribute to its support and its benevolences as the Lord prospers me, and to walk with its members in meekness, fidelity and love.

#### FIRST CHURCH, BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

##### Covenant

Believing in the wisdom and the loving kindness of God, our Father, and in the saving power of Jesus Christ, His Son, the true and living Way, and in the leadership of the Spirit; believing also in the supremacy of Love, the victory of holy character and the Life Eternal, you covenant with this Church as your Church. You promise to love its members, to sustain its worship, to seek its peace, purity, and increase, to share the great work of revealing God to men, of awakening men to themselves and to God, and of uniting men in the spirit of Christ to transform the world into the Kingdom of God.

We the members of this Church and of the Church Universal welcome you to our household of faith. We break the bread of life with you and drink the cup of blessing. We share with you the joy of winning men to our Master. We engage to walk with you in Christian fellowship. We covenant with you to make the Church a Church of prayer, of right living, and of union with Christ and with His disciples everywhere in the service of God and man.

The covenant of the United Church of Bridgeport, Connecticut, is interesting, as this church was organized in 1916 out of the union of two churches, one formed in 1695 and the

other in 1830. The large church resulting from this union is one of the strongest in New England, and its platform is of especial interest. Its confession of faith is the National Council Creed of 1913, and its form of admission of members follows:

UNITED CHURCH, BRIDGEPORT, CONN.

Order for the Reception of New Members.

Address

Beloved in Christ:—

You come before us to make confession of the faith that is in your hearts and to enter into the communion and fellowship of the Church of Christ. Conscious of your unworthiness in the sight of God, you do, with contrition and faith, humbly accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your Master, earnestly purposing to be obedient to Him in all things, as He shall give you grace and strength.

Statement of Faith

We believe in God the Father, infinite in Wisdom, Goodness and Love, and in Jesus Christ, His Son our Lord and Saviour, who for us and our salvation lived and died and rose again and liveth evermore; and in the Holy Spirit, who taketh of the things of Christ and revealeth them to us, renewing, comforting and inspiring the souls of men. We are united in striving to know the will of God as taught in the Holy Scriptures, and in our purpose to walk in His ways as they are made known to us. We hold it to be the mission of the Church of Christ to proclaim the gospel to all mankind, exalting the worship of the one true God, and laboring for the progress of knowledge, the promotion of justice, the reign of peace and the realization of human brotherhood. Depending, as did our fathers, upon the continual guidance of the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth, we work and pray for the transformation of the world into the kingdom of God and we look with faith for the triumph of righteousness and the life everlasting.

Question—Is this also your belief and your purpose?

Answer—It is .

(Then should follow the Sacrament of Baptism.)

To the Candidates previously baptized:—You were baptized in infancy, at the will of your parents, into the household of Christ. Do you now, of your own will and choice, accept and confirm that act of consecration?

Answer: I do.

To the Candidates by Letter:

Dearly Beloved:—You have already been received into the fellowship of the greater Church of Christ. May God bless to you the ministrations of this church, and may you strive, with us, to enlarge its usefulness and increase its power.

## Covenant

To all the Candidates:—In the presence of God and of these witnesses, you do all now promise to give yourselves unreservedly to His service, to strive to know and to do His holy will, and to walk with all men, everywhere, in the love and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. And you do covenant with this church to join heartily in its fellowship of work and worship, to pray and to labor for its increase, purity and peace and to further all its endeavors to serve and save your fellowmen.

Question: Do you thus covenant with God and with us?

Answer: I do.

The Church (rising)—Then do we, the members of this church, gladly welcome you to a part with us in the hopes, the labors and the joys of the Church of Christ. We promise to walk with you in Christian love and sympathy, and to promote, so far as in us lies, your edification in the Christian life. We earnestly renew our own covenant with Jesus Christ, and again dedicate ourselves to His service and the doing of His will. And may God keep us true to Him in all things, and bring us every one at length into the Church triumphant above!

## Benediction

The Lord bless thee, and keep thee;

The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee;

The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. Num. 6: 24-26.

## Concluding words to new members

“So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

“Being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone. In whom each several building fitly framed together groweth into a holy temple in the Lord.” Eph. 2: 19-21.

## PART TWO

# CONGREGATIONAL CREEDS

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### I. EARLY CONGREGATIONAL CREEDS.

The earliest Congregational creeds, if we except the earlier writings of Robert Browne, are the London Confession of 1589 and the Amsterdam Confession of 1596.

We have already considered the covenant of the church of which Richard Fytz was pastor, and its relation to the Plumbers' Hall Congregation in London in 1567. This organization was so harrassed by officers of the law, and so many of its members were imprisoned, that it has been uncertain whether it preserved a continuity of organization until 1586, when we again secure undeniable records of it. John Greenwood was arrested in 1586, and with Henry Barrowe was shut up in the Fleet Prison, where four years later they both gave their lives as martyrs to their faith. Before their death they set forth a formal confession which was published in England in 1589. It is entitled "A True Description out of the Word of God of the Visible Church." A copy of it is in the Dexter Collection of the Yale University, and the text is reprinted in full in Walker's "Creeds and Platforms," pp. 33-40. The notable thing about it is that it contains practically no doctrinal material. Of it Prof. Walker says:

"The *True Description* is substantially an ideal sketch. It could not well be otherwise. Shut up in prison for the advocacy of the opinions here presented, the framers of this

creed could look nowhere upon earth for full exemplification of the polity in which they believed. The church-order which they longed for was, they were confident, of the divinely appointed pattern. They read its outlines in the New Testament. But they had had no experience with its practical workings, and hence they pictured a greater degree of spiritual unity and brotherliness than even Christian men and women have usually shown themselves capable of, and they made little provision for the avoidance of the friction inevitable at times in conducting the most harmonious societies composed of still imperfect men. But the essential features of early Congregationalism are here. It is first of all a 'Description of the Word of God.' The Bible is made the ultimate standard in all matters of church government, as well as points of doctrine. Its delineations of church polity and administration are looked upon as furnishing an ample and authoritative rule for the church in all ages. This true church is not the whole body of the baptized inhabitants of a kingdom, but a company of men who can lay claim to personal Christian experience, and who are united to one another and to Christ in mutual fellowship. The nature of the officers of this church, their number, duties, and character, are all held to be ascertainable from the same God-given Word. They are not the bishops, priests, and deacons of the Anglican hierarchy, but are pastor and teacher, elders, deacons, and widows; and they hold their office not by royal appointment or the nomination of a patron, but 'by the holy & free election of the Lordes holie and free people.' The whole administration of the church is the concern of all the brethren, and the laws governing this administration are all derivable from the Scriptures. But on this very question of administration, while the *True Description* is not as clear as we could wish, it is plain that the creed is far removed from the practical democracy of Robert Browne or the usage of modern Congregationalism. The elders are indeed chosen by the whole church, but once having chosen them, the people are

to be 'most humble, meek, obedient, faithfull, and loving.' The elders are to see that the other officers do their duties aright, and the people obey. But who shall see that the elders do their duty, or who shall seriously limit them in their action? That is not made clear. It is evident that the *True Description* would place the elders apart from and above the brethren as a ruling class, having the initiative in business, being themselves the church in all matters of excommunication, and leaving to the brethren only the power of election, approval of the elders' actions, and an undefined right to reprove the elders if their conduct should not be in accord with the New Testament standard. This conception of the elders as a ruling oligarchy in the church is, in fact, the view elaborated by Barrowe in his other writings, and is the theory which Dr. Dexter happily termed Barrowism, in distinction from the unintentional but thorough-going democracy of Robert Browne. It is a theory which colors the creeds of more than a century of early Congregationalism.

"The almost complete absence of distinctly doctrinal statement in this creed is accounted for by the fact that these London Separatists were in full doctrinal sympathy with the then predominantly Calvinistic views of the English Established Church from which they had come out, and did not feel the necessity of demonstrating their doctrinal soundness, as they were shortly after impelled to do, when settled among strangers in a foreign land."—*Creeds and Platforms*, pp. 31, 32.

The London Church, from which issued 'The True Description,' chose in September, 1592, Francis Johnson as its pastor and John Greenwood as its teacher. Both of these men were soon in prison, and no less than 56 members of the congregation shared the suffering and arrest of their spiritual leaders. Greenwood was put to death; Johnson's life was spared. From the summer of 1593 onward the members of this church, driven from their own land by cruel persecution,

began assembling in the neighborhood of Amsterdam. In 1595, or possibly a little earlier, they called Henry Ainsworth to be their teacher in place of Greenwood, who had suffered death. Francis Johnson was still in prison in London. The church was thus divided, part of it in exile and part of it either in jail or hunted by officers of the law in the home land. In 1596 this persecuted church issued in Amsterdam a booklet of 24 pages, entitled "A True Confession of the Faith, and Humble Acknowledgement of the Allegiance, which We, Her Majesty's Subjects, falsely called Brownists, do Hold Towards God, and Yield to her Majesty and all Other that are Over us in the Lord." (For the text, see Walker's *Creeds and Platforms*, pp. 49-74.) This little book, wrought out in the heat of a terrible persecution, is more controversial in tone, and contains somewhat more of doctrine than the earlier confession; but the doctrine was in the most literal possible sense a testimony and not a test. In so far as doctrinal material was wrought into it, it was for the purpose of defending the church against false charges, or of testifying to the essential oneness of these early Congregationalists with their brethren in the Established Church on vital matters of faith. It was in polity they differed, not in matters contained in the creed.

The next notable deliverance of Congregationalism appeared in 1603, the year of Elizabeth's death and of the coronation of James. The church in Amsterdam sent to the new king, apparently by the hand of Johnson and Ainsworth, a petition that they might be permitted to return to their own land and worship God there without being the victims of persecution. This petition was accompanied by a statement of "The Points of Difference" between the Puritans and the Church of England. There were fourteen of these points, all of them relating to Polity (Walker "*Creeds and Platforms*," pp. 77-80).

The next document which might be called a Confession of Faith, was issued by the Scrooby Church, then in exile in

Leyden, in 1617, Being then earnestly desirous of departing from Holland and establishing themselves in America, this church sent to the Council of England seven articles, signed by John Robinson and William Brewster, in which they set forth their distinctive views as a basis for their plea as loyal subjects that they might be permitted to establish themselves in a new home in a new world. The following is the text of these articles :

Seven Articles which the Church of Leyden sent to the Council of England to be considered of, in respect of their Judgments: occasioned about their going to Virginia. [Date before Nov., 1617; spelling modernized.]

1. To the Confession of Faith published in the name of the Church of England, and to every Article thereof; we do (with the Reformed Churches where we live, and also elsewhere) assent wholly.

2. As we do acknowledge the Doctrine of Faith there taught; so do we, the fruits and effects of the same Doctrine, to the begetting of saving faith in thousands in the land, Conformists and Reformists, as they are called: with whom also, as with our brethren, we do desire to keep spiritual communion in peace; and will practice in our parts all lawful things.

3. The King's Majesty we acknowledge for Supreme Governor in his Dominions in all causes, and over all persons: and that none may decline or appeal from his authority or judgment in any cause whatsoever: but that in all things obedience is due unto him; either active, if the thing commanded be not against GOD'S Word; or passive, if it be, except pardon can be obtained.

4. We judge it lawful for His Majesty to appoint Bishops Civil Overseers or Officers in authority under him in the several Provinces, Dioceses, Congregations, or Parishes, to oversee the Churches, and govern them civilly according to the laws of the land: unto whom, they are, in all things, to give an account; and by them, to be ordered according to godliness.

5. The authority of the present Bishops in the land, we do acknowledge so far forth as the same is indeed derived from His Majesty unto them; and as they proceed in his name: whom we will also therein honor in all things; and him, in them.

6. We believe that no Synod, Classes, Convocation, or Assembly of Ecclesiastical Officers hath any power or authority at all but as the same by the Magistrate given unto them.

7. Lastly, we desire to give unto all Superiors due honor, to preserve the unity of the Spirit with all that fear GOD, to have peace with all men what in us lieth, and wherein we err to be instructed by any.

Subscribed by John Robinson and William Brewster.

As action upon their petition was delayed, and the effort resulted in repeated disappointment, the leaders of the Leyden church had a somewhat extended correspondence with Sir John Wolstenholme, to whom they wrote on December 15, 1617, the following, which may be considered a confession, not of their doctrinal belief, but of their working faith:

1. We verily beleeve & trust y<sup>e</sup> Lord is with us, unto whom & whose service we have given ourselves in many trialls; and that he will graciously prosper our indeavours according to y<sup>e</sup> simplicitie of our harts therin.

2<sup>ly</sup>. We are well weaned from y<sup>e</sup> delicate milke of our mother countrie, and enured to y<sup>e</sup> difficulties of a strange and hard land, which yet in a great parte we have by patience overcome.

3<sup>ly</sup>. The people are for the body of them, industrious, & frugall, we thinke we may safly say, as any company of people in the world.

4<sup>ly</sup>. We are knite together as a body in a most stricte & sacred bond and covenante of the Lord, of the violation whereof we make great conscience, and by vertue whereof we doe hould our selves straitly tied to all care of each others good, and of y<sup>e</sup> whole by every one and so mutually.

5. Lastly, it is not with us as with other men, whom small things can discourage, or small discontentments cause to wish them selves at home againe. We knowe our entertainente in England, and in Holland; we shall much prejudice both our arts & means by removal; who, if we should be driven to returne, we should not hope to recover our present helps and comforts, neither indeed looke ever, for our selves, to attaine unto y<sup>e</sup> like in any other place during our lives, w<sup>ch</sup> are now drawing towards their periods.

About a month later, in January, 1618, the Pilgrims were constrained to send two brief notes covering points that had been raised concerning their views of the ministry and kindred matter; and not feeling sure whether it would be better that their views should be presented in a more concise or more extended form, they sent the two simultaneously, both signed, as the previous statements had been, by John Robinson and William Brewster:

The first breefe note was this.

Touching y<sup>e</sup> Ecclesiasticall ministrie, namely of pastores for teaching, elders for ruling, & deacons for distributing y<sup>e</sup> churches contribution, as allso for y<sup>e</sup> too Sacrements, baptisme, and y<sup>e</sup> Lords

supper, we doe wholly and in all points agree, with y<sup>e</sup> French reformed churches, according to their publick confession of faith.

The oath of Supremacie we shall willingly take if it be required of us, and that convenient satisfaction be not given by our taking y<sup>e</sup> oath of Alleageance.

John Rob:  
William Brewster.

Y<sup>e</sup> 2. was this.

Touching y<sup>e</sup> Ecclesiasticall ministrie, &c. as in y<sup>e</sup> former, we agree in all things with the French reformed churches, according to their publick confession of faith; though some small differences be to be found in our practices, not at all in y<sup>e</sup> substance of the things, but only in some accidentall circumstances.

1. As first, their ministers doe pray with their heads covered; ours uncovered.

2. We chose none for Governing Elders but such as are able to teach; which abilitie they doe not require.

3. Their elders & deacons are annuall, or at most for 2. or 3. years; our perpetuall.

4. Our elders doe administer their office in admonitions & excommunications for publick scandals, publickly & before y<sup>e</sup> congregation; theirs more privately, & in their consistories.

5. We doe administer baptisme only to such infants as whereof y<sup>e</sup> one parente, at y<sup>e</sup> least, is of some church, which some of ther churches doe not observe; though in it our practice accords with their publick confession and y<sup>e</sup> judgmente of y<sup>e</sup> most larned amongst them.

Other differences, worthy mentioning, we know none in these points. Then aboute y<sup>e</sup> oath, as in y<sup>e</sup> former.

Subscribed,  
John R.  
W. B.

The notable thing about all these confessions is that from first to last they say practically nothing about doctrine. We are entirely certain that none of the men who wrought these documents practiced or believed in creed tests as a method of separating one Christian body from another.

## II. LOCAL CHURCH CREEDS

It has been said repeatedly that none of the older Congregational churches had creeds. That statement need not be recalled nor greatly qualified. Yet it is to be remembered that the covenant was not regarded as sacred by reason of the particular form of words which it contained, but was changed in many cases at the discretion of the minister. Among the many confessions employed at one time and another in local churches it would have been strange if some had not included matter which was more or less doctrinal. We have noted the temporary use in the Old South in Boston of a *quasi* credal test during the pastorate of Rev. Samuel Blair for a few months in 1769. There may have been a few other instances, but if so they were local and for the most part temporary. It has been noted, also, that Rev. Hugh Peter, coming from Rotterdam to the Church in Salem, renewed the covenant, and made it longer. We are informed in contemporary manuscripts that Mr. Peter was given to making covenants of his own sort, and Burrage notes some instances (The Covenant Idea, pp. 81-82). These covenants he imposed upon the members of his congregation as tests of admission to the Lord's Supper. We have two covenants of his church in Rotterdam, one of 1633, and the other of 1635 or thereabout; but while they were rigid, and were imposed as tests of fellowship at the Lord's table, they were not doctrinal. We give here the text of this covenant, which, while not doctrinal, was used as a test in a sense that the earlier covenants were not commonly employed:

## THE COVENANT OF THE ENGLISH CHURCH AT ROTTERDAM

The text is from "A Briefe Narration of Some Church Courses," etc., by William Rathband. London, 1644. Pp. 17, 18. Rathband states concerning this covenant that it is "The Covenant of the English Church at Roterdame (as is reported to us) renewed when Mr. H. P. was made their Pastour," which Burrage shows cannot well be correct as to date. This probably dates from about 1635, shortly before Mr. Peter came to America.

We whose names are here-under written, having a long time found by sad experience how uncomfortable it is to walk in a disordered and unsettled condition, &c. 1. Doe renue our Covenant in Baptisme, and avouch God to be our God. 2. We resolve to cleave to the true and pure worship of God, opposing to our power all false wayes. 3. We will not allow our selves in any known sin, but will renounce it, so soon as it is manifested from Gods Word so to be: the Lord lending us power. 4. We resolve to carry our selves in our severall places of government and obedience with all good conscience, knowing we must give an account to God. 5. We will labour for further growth in grace, by hearing, reading, prayer, meditation, and all other wayes we can. 6. We meane not to overburthen our hearts with earthly cares, which are the bane of all holy duties, the breach of the Sabbath, and the other Commandments. 7. We will willingly and meekly submit to Christian Discipline, without murmuring, and shall labour so to continue, and will endeavour to be more forward, zealous, faithfull, loving and wise in admonishing others. 8. We will labour by all our abilities for the furtherance of the Gospell as occasion shall be offered to us. 9. We promise to have our children, servants, and all our charge taught the wayes of God. 10. We will strive to give no offence to our brethren by censuring them rashly by suspitions, evill speakings, or any other way. 11. Lastly, we doe protest not onely against open and scandalous sins, as drunkennesse, swearing, &c., but also against evill companie, and all appearance of evill to the utmost of our power.

Per me H. P.

When Mr. Peter came to Salem, he enlarged the covenant, as we have already noted, from the simple form which had been adoptd in 1629, to that which we have given in the chapter on early covenants; and thereto added certain particulars. It is nothing less than remarkable that these were none of them doctrinal:

## PETER'S SALEM COVENANT, 1636

Gather by Saints together unto me, that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. Ps. 50: 5.

We whose names are here-under written, members of the present Church of Christ in Salem, having found by sad experience how dangerous it is to sitt loose to the Covenant wee make with our God: and how apt wee are to wander into by pathes, even to the loosing of our first aimes in entring into Church fellowship: Doe therefore solemnly in the presence of the Eternall God, both for our own comforts, and those which shall or maye be joyned unto us, renewe that Church Covenant we find this Church bound unto at theire first beginning, viz: That We Covenant with the Lord and with an other; and doe bynd our selves in the presence of God, to walke together in all his waies, according as he is pleased to reveale himself unto us in his Blessed word of truth. And doe more explicitly in the name and feare of God, profess and protest to walke as followeth through the power and grace of our Lord Jesus.

1 first wee avowe the Lord to be our God, and our selves his people in the truth and simplicitie of our spirits.

2 We give our selves to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the word of his grace, fore the teaching, ruleing and sanctifyeing of us in matters of worship, and Conversation, resolveing to cleave to him alone for life and glorie; and oppose all contrarie wayes, cannons and constitutions of men in his worship.

3 Wee promise to walke with our brethren and sisters in this Congregation with all watchfullnes and tendernes, avoyding all jealousies, suspitions, backbyteings, censurings, provoakings, secrete risings of spirite against them; but in all offences to follow the rule of the Lord Jesus, and to beare and forbear, give and forgive as he hath taught us.

4 In publick or in private, we will willingly doe nothing to the ofence of the Church but will be willing to take advise for ourselves and ours as ocasion shalbe presented.

5 Wee will not in the Congregation be forward eyther to shew oure owne gifts or parts in speaking or scrupling, or there discover the fayling of oure brethren or sisters butt attend an orderly cale there unto; knowing how much the Lord may be dishonoured, and his Gospell in the pfeession of it, sleighted, by our distempers, and weaknesses in publyck.

6 Wee bynd our selves to studdy the advancement of the Gospell in all truth and peace, both in regard of those that are within, or without, noe way sleighting our sister Churches, but useing their Counsell as need shalbe: nor laying a stumbling block before any, noe not the Indians, whose good we desire to promote, and soe to converse, as we may avoyd the verrey appearance of evil.

7 We hearbye promise to carrye our selves in all lawfull obedience, to those that are over us, in Church or Commonweale, knowing how well pleasing it will be to the Lord, that they should have encouragement in their places, by our not greiveing theyre spirites through our Irregularities.

8 Wee resolve to approve our selves to the Lord in our peticular calings, shunning ydleness as the bane of any state, nor will wee deale hardly, or oppressingly with any, wherein we are the Lord's stewards:

9 alsoe promyseing to our best abilitie to teach our children and servants, the knowledg of God and his will, that they may serve him also; and all this, not by any strength of our owne, but by the Lord Christ, whose bloud we desire may sprinckle this our Covenant made in his name.—Walker: "Creeds and Platforms," pp. 117-118.

Something approaching a genuine creed arose, however, in Salem, in 1665, "whereby to express their common faith and salvation, and not to be made use of as an imposition upon any." This notable reservation shows with what care the Puritan fathers gave their qualified assent to any form of creed. Walker points out that this was probably used in part as a half-way covenant.—Creeds and Platforms, p. 121.

### THE CONFESSION OF FAITH

I do believe with my heart and confess with my mouth.

#### Concerning God.

That there is but one only true God in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, each of them God, and all of them one and the same Infinite, Eternal God, most Wise, Holy, Just, Mercifull and Blessed for ever.

#### Concerning the Works of God.

That this God is the Maker, Preserver, and Governour of all things according to the counsel of his own Will, and that God made man in his own Image, in Knowledge, Holiness and Righteousness.

#### Concerning the Fall of Man.

That Adam by transgressing the Command of God, fell from God and brought himself and his posterity into a state of Sin and death, under the Wrath and Curse of God, which I do believe to be my own condition by nature as well as any other.

#### Concerning Jesus Christ.

That God sent his Son into the World, who for our sakes became man, that he might redeem and save us by his Obedience unto death, and that he arose from the dead, ascended unto Heaven and sitteth at the right hand of God, from whence he shall come to judge the World.

## Concerning the Holy Ghost.

That God the holy Ghost hath fully revealed the Doctrine of Christ and will of God in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, which are the Word of God, the perfect, perpetuall and only Rule of our Faith and Obedience.

## Concerning the Benefits we have by Christ.

That the same Spirit by Working Faith in Gods Elect, applyeth unto them Christ with all his Benefits of Justification, and Sanctification, unto Salvation, in the use of those Ordinances which God hath appointed in his written word, which therefore ought to be observed by us until the coming of Christ.

## Concerning the Church of Christ.

That all true Believers being united unto Christ as the Head, make up one Misticall Church which is the Body of Christ, the members wherof having fellowship with the Father Son and Holy-Ghost by Faith, and one with an other in love, doe receive here upon earth forgiveness of Sinnes, with the life of grace, and at the Resurrection of the Body, they shall receive everlasting life. Amen.

## THE COVENANT:

I do heartily take and avouch this one God who is made known to us in the Scripture, by the Name of God the Father, and God the Son even Jesus Christ, and God the Holy Ghost to be my God, according to the tenour of the Covenant of Grace; wherein he hath promised to be a God to the Faithfull and their seed after them in their Generations, and taketh them to be his People, and therefore unfeignedly repenting of all my sins, I do give up myself wholly unto this God to believe in love, serve & Obey him sincerely and faithfully according to his written word, against all the temptations of the Devil, the World, and my own flesh and this unto the death.

I do also consent to be a Member of this particular Church, promising to continue steadfastly in fellowship with it, in the publick Worship of God, to submit to the Order Discipline and Government of Christ in it, and to the Ministerial teaching guidance and oversight of the Elders of it, and to the brotherly watch of Fellowship Members: and all this according to Gods Word, and by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ enabling me thereunto. Amen.

Questions to be Answered at the Baptizing of Children, or the substance to be expressed by the Parents.

Quest. Doe you present and give up this child, or these children, unto God the Father, Sonne and Holy Ghost, to be baptized in the Faith, and Engaged in the Coviniant of God professed by this Church?

Quest. Doe you Sollemnly Promise in the Presence, of God, that by the grace of Christ, you will discharge your Covinant duty towards your Children, soe as to bring them up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord, teaching and commanding them to keep the way of God, that they may be able (through the grace of Christ) to make a personall profession of their Faith and to own the Covinant of God themselves in due time.

The clearest exception to the rule that the early Congregational churches had no creeds, is found in the church of Windsor, Conn., in a document prepared by its pastor, Rev. John Warham, in 1647. It is in credal form, and is the oldest creed in Connecticut, and one of the oldest of all Congregational creeds. Yet it will be noted that the doctrinal part is relatively small, being contained in the first three articles which are virtually a preamble to the longer and more fundamental articles, four in number, which constitute and interpret the church covenant. The text is from Walker's "Creeds and Platforms," pp. 157-158.

#### THE WINDSOR CREED-COVENANT, 1647

1. We believe though God made man in an holy and blessed condition, yet by his fall he hath plunged himself and all his posterity into a miserable state.—Rom. iii: 23; v: 12.

2. Yet God hath provided a sufficient remedy in Christ for all broken hearted sinners that are loosened from their sins and selves and world, and are enabled by faith to look to Him in Christ, for mercy, inasmuch as Christ hath done and suffered for such whatever His justice requires to atonement and life; and He doth accept His merits and righteousness for them that believe in Him, and imputeth it to them to their justification, as if they had satisfied and obeyed, themselves.—Heb. vii: 25; Mat. xi: 28; xxii: 24; v: 4, 6; 1 Cor. i: 30; Rom. iv: 3, 5; v: 19.

3. Yet we believe that there is no other name or means to be saved from guilt and the power of sin.—John xiv: 6; Acts iv: 12.

4. We believe God hath made an everlasting covenant in Christ with all penitent sinners that rest on him in Christ, never to reject, or cease to do them good.—Heb. viii: 6; vii: 22; 1 Sam. xii: 22; Jere. xxxii: 40.

5. We believe this covenant to be reciprocal, obliging us to be his people, to love, fear, obey, cleave to him, and serve him with all our heart, mind, and soul; as him to be our God, to love, choose, delight in us, and save and bless us in Christ: yea, as his covenant binds us to love him and his Christ for his own sake, so to love our

brethren for his sake.—Deut. x: 12; Hos. iii: 3; ii: 21; Deut. xxvi: 17-19; John iv: 21.

6. We believe that God's people, besides their general covenant with God, to walk in subjection to him, and Christian love to all his people, ought also to join themselves into a church covenant one with another, and to enter into a particular combination together with some of his people to erect a particular ecclesiastical body, and kingdom, and visible family and household of God, for the managing of discipline and public ordinances of Christ in one place in a dutiful way, there to worship God and Christ, as his visible kingdom and subjects, in that place waiting on him for that blessing of his ordinances and promises of his covenant, by holding communion with him and his people, in the doctrine and discipline of that visible kingdom, where it may be attained.—Rom. xii: 4, 5, 6; 1 Cor. xii: 27, 28; Ephes. iv: 11, 12; Acts ii: 47; Exod. xii: 43, 44, 45; Gen. xvii: 13; Isa. xxiii: 4.

7. We for ourselves, in the sense of our misery by the fall and utter helplessness elsewhere, desire to renounce all other saviours but his Christ, and to rest on God in him alone, for all happiness, and salvation from all misery; and to here, bind ourselves, in the presence of men and angels, by his grace assisting us, to choose the Lord, to serve him, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep all his commandments and ordinances, and his Christ to be our king, priest and prophet, and to receive his gospel alone for the rule of our faith and manners, and to [be] subject to the whole will of Christ so far as we shall understand it; and bind ourselves in special to all the members of this body, to walk in reverend subjection in the Lord to all our superiours, and in love, humility, wisdom, peaceableness, meekness, inoffensiveness, mercy, charity, spiritual helpfulness, watchfulness, chastity, justice, truth, self-denial, one to another, and to further the spiritual good one of another, by example, counsel, admonition, comfort, oversight, according to God, and submit or [selves] subject unto all church administration in the Lord.

### III. THE CONFESSIONS OF 1648 AND 1680

Five times the Congregational churches of the United States or the Colonies in national gatherings have signified a more or less elastic approval of formal confessions of faith. These confessions fell into two groups, separated in time by nearly two hundred years. The first two were the confessions of Westminster and Savoy, affirmed with little modification but with a considerable degree of elasticity, the first in 1648 and the second in 1680. These confessions were reaffirmed with an important preface, at Saybrook, Connecticut, in 1708.

#### (1) THE CAMBRIDGE PLATFORM OF 1648

The Cambridge Synod was convened by call of the General Court of Massachusetts, with particular reference to the formulation of a reply to two sets of questions which had been received by ministers and churches in New England from churches and ministers in England. One of these was addressed to the ministers, and asked for the judgment of the New England brethren concerning "nine positions;" the other, was a communication to the churches of New England from the Puritan churches of England propounding thirty-two questions relating to church government. A call was issued by the General Court, as follows:

That there be a public assembly of the Elders and other messengers of the several churches, within this jurisdiction, who may come together, and meet at Cambridge, upon the first day of September, now next ensuing, then to discuss, dispute, and clear up by the word of God, such questions of church government and discipline, in the things aforementioned or any other, as they shall think needful and meet, and continue so doing till they or the major part of them shall have agreed and consented upon one form of government and discipline, for the main and substantial parts thereof, as that which they judge agreeable to the Holy Scriptures.

The Synod convened in Cambridge, Mass., in September, 1646, and continued in session for fourteen days. It held two adjourned meetings in 1647, and a final ten days' session in August, 1648.

In the interval between the extended sessions of the Synod, the General Court submitted to the Synod the further responsibility of setting forth "a confession of faith which it professes touching the doctrinal part of the religion also," asking the Synod to consider seven different confessions that had been prepared by different New England ministers and to formulate one which might be printed and commended to the churches.

Dr. Walker says, "As the Synod went on, the conception of its possible functions modified. The original thought of the Court had been a settlement of church polity, with special attention to the disputed questions of baptism and church membership. Circumstances had made those questions less pressing, and had brought into greater prominence the broader function of the Synod, that of giving a Constitution to the churches, but it might do even more. The Westminster Assembly had prepared a Confession of Faith in regard to which much secrecy was still observed. It had not yet been adopted by Parliament, though approved August 27, 1647, by the Scotch General Assembly. There was reason to fear that it might not be wholly satisfactory, and therefore at its session on October 27, 1647, the Massachusetts General Court added to the duties of the Synod that of preparing a Confession of Faith."—*Creeds and Platforms*, pp. 182, 183.

By the time the Synod met again in 1648, copies of the Westminster Confession were in the hands of the members of that body. It offered a convenient way out of a more or less difficult situation. It saved the Synod any trouble in the way of choosing among the confessions that had been prepared for other purposes by the different ministers within its membership, and what was more important, it enabled the Puritans of

New England to certify to the Puritans of old England that they were more orthodox than they had been suspected of being. Instead, therefore, of preparing a new creed, they voted to approve the doctrinal part of the Westminster Confession "for the substance thereof." They came very quickly to this agreement, and were happy that they were able to do so. They joined in a parting hymn and went home sooner than they had anticipated.

For the most part, the Westminster Confession was a satisfactory statement of their own doctrinal positions, and wherein they differed, the phrase "for the substance thereof" assisted their consciences, as it helped the conscience of many of their descendants in subsequent years.

## (2) THE REFORMING SYNOD OF 1679-80

As in the case of the Cambridge Synod, so of the reforming Synod at Boston, the churches were called together to consider practical matters of administration and discipline, and came to their doctrinal confession at a subsequent session.

The Reforming Synod was called by the General Court, and met in Boston, September 10, 1679. Two questions were discussed, "1. What are the evils that have provoked the Lord to bring his judgments on New England? 2. What is to be done so that these evils may be reformed?"

This Synod having disposed of the main questions which brought the churches together, approved the Cambridge Platform, which it had been proposed to amend, still using the convenient and altogether proper qualifying phrase "for the substance of it."

The second session was held definitely to consider a confession of faith; and again, as before, it was rather expected that the New England divines would produce a creed of their own; for New England had no general confession, having in 1648 adopted without very much consideration the doctrinal parts of the Westminster Confession, in a way that bound no

one very closely to adhere to it. But as in the earlier Synod, an easier method presented itself than that of preparing a new confession. The Savoy Declaration of 1658 had been adopted in England and forthwith became the recognized expression of the general faith of Congregationalism. Rev. Urian Oakes and Dr. Increase Mather, who were appointed on the Creed Committee of the Reforming Synod, had both been in England during the meeting at the Savoy, and they followed the example of the earlier Synod of proposing an endorsement of the Savoy Declaration instead of undertaking a new confession. The reason was that the Puritans in America wished as much as possible to express their faith in the same terms as those employed by their brethren in England. The English Puritans were inclined to be suspicious of the orthodoxy of their American brethren, and the easiest way to show them that the Americans were sound in the faith was to adopt their own confession "for the substance thereof."

"The Preface declares that the Savoy Confession, slightly modified, 'was twice publicly read, examined and approved of.' by the Synod; and that as at Cambridge in 1648, a desire to avoid any imputation of heresy from the Puritan party in England led the Synod to prefer the formulæ of well-known English assemblies to an expression of faith in its own language. The fact was, that however individual New England might be in church polity, no doctrinal peculiarities had as yet developed on this side of the Atlantic. No doctrinal discussions of consequences had taken place. The New England Churches still stood, as a body, with uncriticizing loyalty on the basis of the Puritan theology of England as it had been in the first half of the seventeenth century."—*Walker: Creeds and Platforms*, p. 421.

The Confessions of 1648 and 1680 served the New England churches rather as substitutes for a confession of faith than as an adequate expression thereof. The New England churches felt no great need of such confessions, but did feel

the need of a sympathetic bond of union with their brethren in England and Scotland. Increasingly the inadequacy of such symbols was felt; but when in 1865 the Burial Hill Declaration was adopted, there were those who protested against its irreverence in having added anything to confessions so venerable. Prof. Edward A. Lawrence, of Connecticut, contributed to the Congregational Quarterly for April, 1866, an extended article denouncing "The revolutionary movement, hurriedly started on the way to Plymouth, and carried out among the tombs of the fathers in such a tumult, almost tempest, of ecclesiastical passion." He counted it "a marvel if the bones of the ancient dead were not disquieted in their graves," and wondered "that the spirits of our godly sires did not rise and rebuke their irreverent sons." That the reference to Calvinism in the Committee's earlier report should have been juggled out of the confession "in the midst of such serio-comic transactions" and a new confession adopted as a kind of incident in an excursion, seemed to him a horrible desecration, and led him to recall the original circumstances of the approval of the Westminster Confession in 1648, and of that of Savoy in 1680. He did this with such accuracy of scholarship and such sympathy with the result that we gladly preserve here his excellent account of these two Confessions as they formulated in England and approved in New England.

He admitted that for something like 100 years New England had paid very little attention to these two venerable confessions, but believed that the Council of 1865 by its irreverent reference to these confessions in the Burial Hill declaration would serve to "rake them from the ashes of the past and replace them on the shelves of our honored and increasing theological literature." That has not been precisely the result of the action of 1865, but Dr. Lawrence's article has historical value. Referring to these two confessions he said:

“In strictness of speech, neither of these confessions was ‘set forth’ by either of the synods referred to. The Synod of 1648 simply gave their assent to, or reaffirmed, the doctrinal part of the Westminster confession. ‘This synod, having perused and considered (with much gladness of heart and thankfulness to God) the confession of faith published by the late reverend Assembly in England, do judge it to be very holy, orthodox, and judicious in all matters of faith, and do therefore freely and fully consent thereunto, for the substance thereof. Only, in those things which have respect to church government and discipline, we do refer ourselves to the platform of discipline agreed upon by this present assembly, and we do therefore think it meet that this confession of faith should be commended to the churches of Christ among us, and to the learned court, as worthy of their due consideration and acceptance.’ ”—*Mather’s Magnalia*, ii. 155.

This confession—the joint production of the Westminster Assembly of Presbyterians and Congregationalists—is a strictly Presbyterian symbol. It is the accredited standard of theology and ecclesiastical law in both of the great branches of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. The Congregationalists in the Assembly were able debaters and strong men; but they were largely outnumbered by the Presbyterians, who were also some of them very strong men. They agreed on a statement of doctrine, to which all subscribed, but to the polity of the body the Congregationalists gave no assent; neither did the Parliament of England, nor the people.

“During the Commonwealth, the Congregational churches increased rapidly in number and importance. A little before the Protector’s death, they petitioned him for liberty to call a synod, in order to prepare and set forth a Congregational Confession of Faith. Some of the court opposed it. But Cromwell said it should be granted; ‘they must be satisfied,’ and gave consent. On the 12th of October, 1658, the elders and messengers from a hundred and twenty churches

assembled at the Savoy, the old ecclesiastical head-quarters, in the city of London,—the former assembly being held at the chapel of Henry VII., within the corporate limits of the city of Westminster. They opened the synod with a day of fasting and prayer. After debating awhile whether they should adopt the doctrinal articles of the Westminster Assembly, or draw up a new declaration, they decided to do neither exactly, but to modify and amend the former, keeping as near to the methods and spirit of it as possible. The committee appointed to the work were Drs. Goodwin and Owen, and Messrs. Nye, Bridge, Caryl, and Greenhill. The assembly were in session eleven working, and two or three worshipping days. Their object was harmoniously and happily accomplished, and set forth as ‘A Declaration of Faith and Order, avowed and practised in the Congregational Churches in England.’

“Here now a Congregational Confession, the first general one since the Apostles’ creed, gradually sprang up in the days of primitive Congregationalism. And, one has only to examine it attentively, to see that it is in the true apostolic succession of creeds, by a living chain from that early one, down through the Nicene, Chalcedo-Athanasian and the great Protestant utterances. It is in substantial agreement with the Thirty-nine Articles, the admirable doctrinal standard of the Church of England; and in nearly circumstantial accord with that of the Presbyterians.

“Some doubted, as we have said, the wisdom of any action upon this subject by the Council. Our Congregational fathers at the Savoy placed their declaration on the ground of a primary *duty*. ‘The confession of the faith that is in us,’ say they, ‘when justly called for, is so indispensable a due all owe to the glory of the sovereign God, that it is ranked among the duties of the first commandment.’—*Hanbury’s Memorials*, iii. 417. And for want of such a confession, they say, “the generality of churches have been, in a manner, like so many ships, though holding forth the same general colors, launched singly,

and sailing *apart* and *alone* in the vast ocean of these tumultuous times, and have been exposed to every wind of doctrine, under no other conduct than the Word and Spirit.'—*Hanbury's Memorials*, iii. 523.

“By way of explaining their divergencies from the Westminster Confession, ‘A few things,’ they say, ‘we have added for obviating some erroneous opinions that have been more broadly and boldly here of late maintained by the asserters, **than in former times**; and have made other additions and alterations in method here and there, and some clearer explanations as we found occasion.’ They substitute for the list of books of the Bible, given in the Westminster, simply the number, ‘sixty-six.’ In the sixth chapter, on the Fall of Man, they introduce the covenant of works and of life, which is not in the Westminster; and where the Westminster says, ‘*they* fell,’ the Savoy has it, ‘they, and we in them, fell.’ It omits the fourth section of the twentieth chapter, on disturbers of the peace of the church; the latter part of the twenty-fourth, on Marriage and Divorce; the thirtieth, on Church Censures, and the thirty-first, on Synods and Councils. They added an entire chapter on the Gospel, following that on the Law, but which was made up of principles scattered through the Confessions. Some doctrines are shaded differently. The Westminster fathers say, ‘They’—our first parents—‘being the root of all mankind;’ the Savoy are more full,—‘They being the root, and, by God’s appointment, standing in the room and stead of all mankind.’ The former say, ‘The same death in sin and corrupted nature are conveyed,’—the latter, ‘the guilt of the first sin was imputed, and the corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity.’ The chapters on the church are not in entire agreement. The Westminster defines the visible church as ‘consisting of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children.’ The children of believers are not included in the Savoy definition, though they are to be baptized. In the former, ‘the ministry,

oracles, and ordinances of God' are given to the catholic church as an identical organism, with no restrictions to the *churches*, in respect to government. By the latter the church can not be 'intrusted with the administration of any ordinances, or have any officers to rule or govern in or over the *whole* body.' The one cuts up the old root of the Papacy, Prelacy, and all hierarchies. The other leaves it to shoot up in Presbyteries, Synods, and the government of a General Assembly.

"These are the chief *differences* in the doctrinal positions of these two symbols.

"The Congregational Churches of England had now their Confession and the Presbyterians had theirs. But the churches of New England were in the use of the Presbyterian, and not the Congregational, as their standard. Thus they stood for thirty years. At the Synod of 1662, nothing was proposed relating to a Declaration of Faith, and little was done, except to plant the seeds of the disastrous half-way covenant. Eighteen years later, when the Synod of 1679 came to its second session in May, 1680, a Confession was the chief business. Here the same questions met the Provincial Synod and the National Council. Two Confessions were before them,—one Presbyterian, the other Congregational. Should they make a new one? And if so, should it be a long or a short one?—according to the recent speculations in philosophy, or without any specific philosophy? Or if they should adopt one of the old symbols, which? or, should they reaffirm them both? The Fathers of 1648 had declared the Westminster Confession 'very holy, orthodox, and judicious.' But those of 1680 took up the Savoy Declaration, and examined it very carefully. It was twice publicly read in the synod. Some slight changes were made, such as restoring the list of the books of the Bible, and including the children of believers in the definition of the church. Then it was adopted by the synod, the General Court of Massachusetts, and the churches of the New England col-

onies generally. Thus the Congregational churches of England and of New England not only held the same faith, but also the same 'Declaration of Faith.' "

### (3) THE SAYBROOK PLATFORM OF 1708

A low state of religion prevailed in New England at the end of the seventeenth century. Of the condition prevalent, Prof. Walker has written:

#### THE PROPOSALS OF 1705

"Though the Reforming Synod doubtless has some effect in bettering the religious condition of New England, the results were not what its promoters had hoped. The closing years of the seventeenth century were times of trial for New England; the loss of the Massachusetts charter, the tyranny of Andros, the vain efforts to secure a renewal of the ancient privileges of the leading colony, as well as the disastrous outcome of the two attempts to capture Quebec, and the demoralizing struggles with the Indians, together with the grim tragedy of the witchcraft delusion, all combined to make the political and commercial outlook of the colonies gloomy and to render a high degree of spiritual life difficult of maintenance in the churches. If the second generation on New England soil had shown a decided declension from the fervent zeal of the founders, the third generation was even less moved by the early ideals. The founders had borne part in a movement which had embraced a nation. They had been the leaders in an attempt to establish in a new England the principles of worship and church-government which were believed in and struggled for by a great party at home. For a time, the rulers of England had looked with favor on their enterprise and had sought council of their experience. But all this was changed. New England was no longer the vanguard of the great Puritan cause of the mother-land. That party in England had spent its force.

New England had become of necessity provincial, when the triumph of Episcopacy in old England had made her cease to be a factor of consequence in the religious life of that land, for the bond between the home land and the new settlements across the sea had been religious far more than political or commercial. And in the struggles and disasters of the latter half of the seventeenth century the New Englander had become narrower in thought and in sympathy than his father had been. If he had grown more tolerant toward variations in religion, it was the result of increasing religious indifferentism, itself the natural consequence of reaction from the high-wrought experiences of the first generation. It was with pathetic, almost exaggerated, consciousness of their own comparative feebleness that the ecclesiastical writers of the second and third generations looked back to the giants of the early days; for the New England of 1700 was meaner, narrower, in every way less inspired with the sense of a mission to accomplish and an ideal to uphold, than the New England of 1650.

“To the majority of the ministers of the time the outlook seemed full of peril. The recent political changes, and even more the passing away of the older generation, had greatly lessened the influence of the ministry on legislation and the conduct of government. The restiveness which had all along been more or less felt under the rule of the clerical element had gathered strength. In Boston foreign influence had established Episcopacy, and though Episcopacy was distinctly an exotic on Massachusetts soil, there were an increasing number of persons throughout the churches who desired more or less modification of the prevalent strictness in regard to admissions and of the almost universal restriction of the choice of ministers to members in full communion. These two tendencies were brought most sharply into contrast at Boston, then, as now, the intellectual center of the commonwealth.

“While the events just considered were in progress in Massachusetts, a similiar movement, to some extent induced

by the proceedings in the older colony, was in progress in Connecticut. The Half-Way controversy had resulted in 1669 in the toleration of some divergence in ecclesiastical usage 'vntill better light in an orderly way doth appeare;' but the same differences of opinion which had been shown in the questions propounded by the General Court in 1666 continued, and the low state of religion which marked the closing years of the seventeenth century led to much discipline and not a little quarrel in the churches. The feeling was widespread throughout the colony, and the adjacent parts of Massachusetts, that some strengthening of church-government was desirable, for the same reasons that it was sought in the vicinity of Boston.

"The movement which led to the Saybrook Synod in Connecticut ran parallel to and was in considerable degree conducted by men who were engaged in founding Yale College, and these men were in turn affiliated in some measure with those in eastern Massachusetts who were seeking a stricter church government. The connection between the founding of Yale College and the party about Boston who were opposed to the liberalizing of Harvard and the rejection of the influence of the Mathers has been pressed too far by President Quiney, and it has been clearly shown that the desire of the ministers of Connecticut, long cherished especially in the coast towns of the old New Haven colony, that they might have 'a nearer and less expensive seat of learning,' amply accounts for the establishment of the Connecticut college. It had its birth independently of Boston ecclesiastical quarrels. But while thus moved by Connecticut rather than Massachusetts interests, the men who founded Yale College in 1701 were in active sympathy with the conservative party in Boston. . . .

"The attempts of the ecclesiastical leaders of Massachusetts to establish standing councils had borne fruit in 1705 and 1706, and cannot have been unfamiliar to their friends in Connecticut. The thought of the ministers of Connecticut turned toward something more than the approval of a con-

fession of faith, they would now couple with it the establishment of a system of stricter government like that attempted in Massachusetts. And, in December, 1707, an event well-nigh without a parallel in American history occurred; a leading minister of the colony, Gurdon Saltonstall of New London, was called directly from the pulpit to the governor's chair,—a post which he continued to fill till his death in 1724. Saltonstall had experienced in his own pastorate the evils of a church quarrel, and on his election to the governorship it would appear that the movement for stricter government went more rapidly forward. Sometime between May 13 and 22, 1708, the following bill was introduced into and passed the upper House, of which the governor was then a member. In its original form it called, apparently, only for assemblages of ministers; but somewhere in its passage, either in the upper House, or more probably among the representatives of the towns who passed it on May 24th, the statute was amended so as to summon the brethren of the churches as well as their pastors, and thus render the bodies for which it called truly synods:

This Assembly, from their own observation and from the complaint of many others, being made sensible of the defects of the discipline of the churches of this government, arising from the want of a more explicate asserting the rules given for that end in the holy scriptures, from which would arise a firm establishment amongst ourselves, a good and regular issue in cases subject to ecclesiastical discipline, glory to Christ our head, and edification to his members, hath seen fit to ordein and require, and it is by authority of the same ordeined and required, that the ministers of the churches in the several counties of this government shall meet together at their respective countie towns, with such messengers as the churches to which they belong shall see cause to send with them on the last Monday in June next, there to consider and agree upon those methods and rules for the management of ecclesiastical discipline which by them shall be judged agreeable and conformable to the word of God, and shall at the same meeting appoint two or more of their number to be their delegates, who shall all meet together at Saybrook, at the next Commencement to be held there, when they shall compare the results of the ministers of the several counties, and out of and from them to draw a form of ecclesiastical discipline which by two or more persons delegated by them shall

be offered to this Court at their sessions at New haven in October next, to be considered of and confirmed by them, and that the expence of the above mentioned meetings be defrayed out of the publick treasury of this Colonie.

“Pursuant to this order, the representatives of the churches of each county met, though no records of their doings have survived. By these councils, ministers and delegates were chosen to be present at the anniversary of the infant college, and naturally convenience, together with the prominence of the men involved, brought it about that eight of the twelve ministers thus selected to represent the Connecticut churches were trustees of the college. The ministerial element was in the decided predominance. The messengers from New London County to the Saybrook Synod were two, while Hartford and Fairfield Counties sent one each, and New Haven was represented by no laymen. Doubtless other brethren were appointed who did not appear at the meeting. But there is no reason to hold that the body which gathered at Saybrook Sept. 9, 1708, was not fairly able to voice the sentiments of the Connecticut churches as a whole.”—Creeds and Platforms, 465-500, passim.

This Synod, assembled for consideration of practical questions of reform, and the conservation of the spiritual heritage of the Colony, approved the confessions of Westminster and Savoy, as the Massachusetts synods had done, but prefaced this finding with a notable deliverance concerning, among other things, the authority of human creeds. It is contained, together with the text of the Savoy Declaration, in Walker's Creeds and Platforms, pp. 517 seq :

A confession of faith owned and consented to by the elders and messengers of the churches in the colony of Connecticut in New-England, assembled by delegation at Say-Brook, September 9th, 1708—Eph. 4: 5. One faith—Col. 2: 5. Joying and beholding your Order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.—New-London in N. E. Printed by Thomas Short, 1710.

## A PREFACE

Among the Memorable Providences relating to our English Nation in the last Century, must be acknowledged the selling of English Colonies in the American parts of the World; Among all which this hath been Peculiar unto and to the distinguishing Glory of that Tract called New-England, that the Colonies there were Originally formed, not for the advantage of Trade and a Worldly Interest: But upon the most noble Foundation, even of Religion, and the Liberty of their Consciences, with respect unto the Ordinances of the Gospel Administred in the Purity and Power of them; an happiness then not to be enjoyed in their Native Soil.

We joyfully Congratulate the Religious Liberty of our Brethren in the late Auspicious Reign of K. William, and Q. Mary, of Blessed Memory, & in the present Glorious Reign, and from the bottom of our Hearts bless the Lord whose Prerogative it is to reserve the Times and Seasons in his own hand, who also hath Inspired the Pious Mind of Her most Sacred Majesty, [Queen Anne] whose Reign we constantly and unfeignedly Pray, may be long and Glorious, with Royal Resolutions, Inviolably to maintain the Toleration.

Deus enim - - hæc Otia fecit.

Undoubtedly if the same had been the Liberty of those Times, our Fathers would have been far from Exchanging a most pleasant Land (*dulce solum patriæ*) for a vast and howling Wilderness; Since for the enjoyment of so desirable Liberty a considerable number of Learned, Worthy and Pious Persons were by a Divine Impulse and Extraordinary concurrence of Dispositions engaged to adventure their Lives Families and Estates upon the vast Ocean following the Lord into a Wilderness, a Land then not sown: Wherein Innumerable difficulties staring them in the Face were outbid by Heroick Resolution, Magnanimity & confidence in the Lord alone. Our Fathers trusted in the Lord and were delivered, they trusted in him and were not confounded. It was their care to be with the Lord, and their indulgence, that the Lord was with them, to a Wonder preserving supporting protecting and animating them; dispatching and destroying the Pagan Natives by extraordinary Sickness and Mortality, that there might be room for his People to serve the Lord our God in. It was the Glory of our Fathers, that they heartily professed the only Rule of their Religion from the very first to be the Holy Scripture, according whereunto, so far as they were perswaded upon diligent Inquiry, Solicitous search, and faithful Prayer conformed was their Faith, their Worship together with the whole Administration of the House of Christ, and their manners, allowance being given to humane Failures and Imperfections.

That which they were most Solicitous about, and wherein their Liberty had been restrained, respected the Worship of God and the Government of the Church of Christ according to his own appointment, their Faith and Profession of Religion being the same, which was generally received in all the Reformed Churches of Europe. and in Substance the Assemblies Confession, as shall be shown anon.

It cannot be denied, that the Usage of the Christian Church whose Faith wholly rested upon the word of God respecting Confessions of Faith is very Ancient and that which is universally acknowledged to be most so, and of Universal acceptance and consent is commonly called the Apostles Creed, a Symbol sign or Badge of the Christian Religion, called the Apostles, not because they composed it, for then it must have been received into the Canon of the Holy Bible, but because the matter of it agreeth with the Doctrine & is taken out of the Writings of the Apostles. Consequent hereunto, as the necessity of the Church for the Correcting Condemning & Suppressing of Heresy & Error required, have been emitted Ancient and Famous Confessions of Faith composed and agreed upon by Oecumenical Councils, e. g. Of Nice against Arrius, of Constantinople against Macedonius, of Ephesu against Nestorius, of Chalcedon against Eutyches. And when the Light of Reformation broke forth into the dispersing of Popish darkness, the Reformed Nations agreed upon Confessions of Faith, famous in the World and of especial service to theirs and standing Ages. And among those of latter times Published in our Nation most worthy of Repute and Acceptance we take to be the Confession of Faith, Composed by the Reverend Assembly of Divines Convened at Westminster, with that of the Savoy, in the substance and in expressions for the most part the same: the former professedly assented & attested to, by the Fathers of our Country by Unanimous Vote of the Synod of Elders and Messengers of the Churches met at Cambridge the last of the 6th Month 1648. The latter owned and consented to by the Elders and Messengers of the Churches Assembled at Boston, May 12th, 1680. The same we doubt not to profess to have been the contant Faith of the Churches in this Colony from the first Foundation of them. And that it may appear to the Christian World, that our Churches do not maintain differing Opinions in the Doctrine of Religion, nor are desirous of any reason to conceal the Faith we are perswaded of: The Elders and Messengers of the Churches in this Colony of Connecticut in New England, by vertue of the Appointment and Encouragement of the Honourable the General Assembly, Convened by Delegation at Say Brook, Sept. 9th, 1708. Unanimously agreed, that the Confession of Faith owned and Consented unto by the Elders and Messengers of the Churches Assembled at Boston in New-England May 12th. 1680. Being the second Session of that Synod, be Recommended to the Honourable the General Assembly of this Colony at their next Session, for their Publick Testimony thereto, as the Faith of the Churches of this Colony, which Confession together with the Heads of Union and Articles for the Administration of Church Government herewith emitted were Presented unto and approved and established by the said General Assembly at New-Haven on the 14th of October 1708.

This Confession of Faith we offer as our firm Perswasion well and fully grounded upon the Holy Scripture, and Commend the same unto all and particularly to the people of our Colony to be examined accepted and constantly maintained. We do not assume

to ourselves, that any thing be taken upon trust from us, but commend to our people these following Counsels.

I. That You be immovably and unchangeably agreed in the only sufficient, and invariable Rule of Religion, which is the Holy Scripture the fixed Canon, uncapable of addition or diminution. You ought to account nothing ancient, that will not stand by this Rule, nor any thing new that will. Do not hold your selves bound to Unscriptural Rites in Religion, wherein Custom itself doth many times misguid. Believe it to be the honour of Religion to resign and captivate our Wisdom and Faith to Divine Revelation.

II. That You be determined by this Rule in the whole of Religion. That Your Faith be right and Divine, the Word of God must be the foundation of it, and the Authority of the Word the reason of it. You may believe the most Important Articles of Faith, with no more than an Humane Faith; And this is evermore the cause, when the Principle Faith is resolved into, is any other than the holy Scripture. For an Orthodox Christian to resolve his Faith, into Education Instruction and the perswasion of others is not an higher reason, than a Papist, Mohametan, or Pagan can produce for his Religion.

Pay also unto God the Worship, that will bear the Tryal of and receive Establishment by this Rule. Have always in Readiness a Divine Warrant for all the Worship you Perform to God. Believe that Worship is accepted and that only, which is directed unto, and Commanded, and hath the promise of a Blessing from the Word of God. Believe that Worship not Divinely Commanded is in vain, nor will answer the Necessities and Expectations of a Christian, and is a Worshipping, you know not what. Believe in all Divine Worship, it is not enough that this or that Act of Worship is not forbidden in the Word of God; If it be not Commanded, and you perform it, You may fear, You will be found Guilty and exposed to Divine Displeasure. Nadab and Abihu paid dear for Offering in Divine Worship that which the Lord Commanded them not. It is an honour done unto Christ, when you account that only Decent Orderly and Convenient in his House, which depends upon the Institution and appointment of himself, who is the only Head and Law-giver of his Church.

III. That you be well grounded in the firm Truths of Religion. We have willingly taken pains to add the Holy Scriptures, whereon every point of Faith contained in this Confession doth depend, and is born up by, and commend the same to your diligent perusal, that You be established in the truth and your Faith rest upon its proper Basis, the Word of God. Follow the Example of the Noble Bereans, Search the Scriptures, Grow in Grace and the knowledge of Christ, be not Children in Understanding, but Men. Labour for a sound confirmed Knowledge of these Points in the evidence of them. See that they be deeply rooted in your Minds and Hearts, that so You be not an easie prey to such as lie in wait to deceive. For the want hereof to be condoled is the Unhappiness of many ever learning and never coming to the knowledge of, the Truth.

IV. That having applied the Rule of Holy Scripture to all the Articles of this Confession, and found the same upon Tryal the

Unchangable and Eternal truths of God: You remember and hold them fact [fast], Contend earnestly for them as the Faith once delivered to the Saints. Value them as Your great Charter, the Instrument of Your Salvation, the Evidence of your not failing of the Grace of God, and receiving a Crown that fadeth not away. Maintain them, and every of them all your dayes with undanted Resolution against all opposition, whatever the event be, and the same transmit safe and pure to Posterity: Having bought the Truth, on no hand sell it. Believe the Truth will make you free: Faithful is he that hath promised: So shall none take away your Crown.

Finally, Do not think it enough that your Faith and Order be according to the Word of God, but live accordingly. It is not enough to believe well, You run your selves into the greatest hazzard unless you be careful to live well, and that this be, All your Life and Conversation must be agreeable to the Rule of Gods Word. This is the Rule of a Christian Conversation and Practical Reformation Rest not in the form of Godliness, denying the power of it. Stir up an holy Zeal, Strengthen the things that remain that are ready to die, Be not carried away with the Corruptions Temptations and evil Examples of the Times, but be blameless & without Rebuke, the Sons of God in a froward Generation. They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.

Remember ye our Brethren in this Colony; That we are a part of that Body, for which the Providence of God hath wrought Wonders and are obliged by and Accountable for all the Mercies dispensed from the beginning of our Fathers settling this Country until now. There he spake with us, That the practical piety and serious Religion of our progenitors is exemplary and for our Imitation, and will reflect confounding shame on us, if we prove Degenerate. The Lord grant that the noble design of our Fathers in coming to this Land, may not be forgotten by us, nor by our Children after us, even the Interest of Religion, which we can never Exchange for a Temporal Interest without the Fowlest Degeneracy and most Inexcusable Defection. To Conclude, the Solemn Rebukes of Providence from time to time in a series of Judgments, and in particular, the General drought in the Summer past, together with the grievous Disappointment of our Military Undertaking, the Distresses Sickness and Mortality of our Camp cannot successfully be Improved but by a self humbling Consideration of our Ways and a thorough Repentance of all that is amiss: So will the God of our Fathers be our God, and he will be a Wall of Fire round about us and the Glory in the midst of us in this present and all succeeding Generations. AMEN.

It was nearly two centuries before the Congregational Churches met again in National Council after the Reforming Synod, and during that time, the Confessions of 1648 and 1680 served as exponents of Congregational doctrine "for the sub-

stance thereof." The important things to be remembered about them are,

1. That the Synods which adopted them came together to consider matters of polity and discipline, and that the questions of doctrine which grew out of them were subordinate and incidental.

2. That in each case they began with some thought of producing an original creed, and in each case ended, and without much discussion, in the adoption of one ready made.

3. That the Westminster and Savoy declarations were virtually identical as to doctrine.

4. That they were approved not for form but as to substance, "allowance being given to human failures and imperfections."

During this period, few of the local churches had creeds; their covenants sufficed.

Virtually, therefore, until 1865, the Congregational Churches of the United States got on very well without any home-made creed which could establish claim to national acceptance. All this time, however, they were developing a polity of their own. Yet their willingness to make new declarations of polity and their unwillingness to make new declarations of faith, did not grow out of any disregard of doctrine as contrasted with government; they counted doctrine the more important. But they regarded their doctrine as essentially one with that of other Christian bodies, and especially one with the great Puritan communions, Congregational and Presbyterian, in Great Britain, and wherein they differed they could easily stretch a covering for the difference in the elastic phrase "for substance of doctrine."

They wrote with considerable facility confessions for local use, though seldom or never imposing them as tests for church membership; but they shrank from the apparently needless and somewhat hazardous task of making creeds which the whole denomination might be supposed in some measure to

endorse. Down to 1865 it was enough to refer to the confessions of 1648 and 1680 as containing the essential faith held by Congregationalists "for the substance thereof." Less and less did those confessions represent in their formal statement the living faith of the Congregational churches. Fewer and fewer Congregationalists remembered what were the Confessions of 1648 and 1680, but the figures sounded well, and served their purpose. The time was coming when the Congregational churches would have need of some other formal statement of their faith than that contained in the Westminster Confession and the Declaration of Savoy, even though it still was, and for that matter yet is, possible for a Congregationalist to assent to them, and to any other orthodox creed, for the substance of the doctrine which they embody.

Did any Cromwellian accuse the New England brethren of having separated themselves from the faith and fortunes of their Independent brethren in England? The ready answer was their cheerful acceptance of the Savoy Declaration "for the substance thereof." Did any Scotch or English Presbyterian declare that Puritanism in New England was schismatic and had departed from the faith of the English Puritans? The New England brethren had no hesitation in saying that they accepted for substance of doctrine the Westminster Confession, and they were heartily glad to say it, to sing a hymn, and adjourn. Nay, they went farther. If a member of the Church of England called them harsh names for their departure from the historic Church, they were quite ready to affirm their general approval of the Articles of Faith of the Church of England.

It is to be noted that neither the Confession of 1648 nor that of 1680 was intended to be used as a test of fitness for church membership. No Congregational church, so far as known, ever so employed either of these creeds; nor was there a spirit which would have sought so to employ a confession of

faith until about the time of the outbreak of the Unitarian controversy.

One reason the early Congregationalists were averse to the making of creeds was that they did not consider themselves a sect. They knew that they were not the whole of the Church of Christ, but they endeavored to organize their own churches without cutting themselves off in a spirit of isolation from other branches of the church of Christ. It is true that in those periods of bitter controversy some Separatist congregations withdrew from the Church of England with bitter denunciations. Cotton Mather refers to this and contrasts with it the tearful departure of the Puritan colony, who sailed for Salem in 1629. Notwithstanding their bitter sufferings and cruel persecutions, they loved the Church of England. Mather relates that when the Abigail, in June 1628, was sailing for Salem, Mr. Higginson called his children and other passengers to the stern of the ship to take their last sight of England, and said, 'We will not say, as the Separatists were wont to say at their leaving of England, Farewell, Babylon! farewell, Rome! but we will say, Farewell, dear England, farewell, the church of God in England and all the Christian friends there. We do not go to New England as Separatists from the Church of England, though we cannot but separate from the corruptions in it; but we go to practice the positive part of church reformation, and propagate the Gospel in America.' " Whether or not the incident occurred as narrated, there is no doubt that it expresses the sincere sentiment of the Puritan colonists, towards the National Church which with all its faults they loved.

To this same principle the Pilgrims, though Separatists, were committed. Dr. Bacon truly said:

"There was one principle to which the church of Plymouth stood committed by all its antecedents, to wit, that a Christian church is necessarily a church of Christians, withdrawn from fellowship with the openly unbelieving and ungodly and unit-

ed to each other by a covenant, express or implied, of common duty and mutual faithfulness. Yet even this principle, by which they had justified their withdrawal from the "mixed multitude" of the English parish churches to the conventicle at Serooby manor-house, was held by the Plymouth exiles in no such bitter and exasperated spirit as had been manifested by some of the Separatists, but in a spirit of patience, respect and loving fellowship, even under extreme provocation, towards English fellow-Christians who held both their principle and their action in the severest reprobation. The latest words of saintly John Robinson, "found in his study after his decease," were counsels of peace towards the unseparated brethren in the national church of England. In this touching farewell to his departing flock, he spoke in the spirit of prophecy of a time when unseparated Puritan ministers of the Church of England should 'come to the practice of the ordinances out of the kingdom' and out of the reach of the Act of Uniformity and the bishops' courts, and predicted that when this should be, 'there will be no difference between them and you.'—Congregationals, 28, 29.

Of the church in Salem, Dr. Bacon wrote:

"It was far from the thoughts of the Salem colonists to found a *sect*. However mistaken they might be as to the criteria of Christian character, they had no intention of excluding from their fellowship any true disciple of Jesus Christ. As little did they intend to permit any, in the spirit of Separatism, to cut themselves off from the common fellowship and organize themselves into a scismatic conventicle."—p. 41.

Referring to subsequent events that led to the call of the Cambridge Synod of 1646-8, he said,—

"The colonies had to face the fact that already in 1643 a painfully large proportion of the people were standing outside of the church. In Massachusetts, where the suffrage was conditioned on church membership, the active citizenship was reduced to an oligarchy of about one in ten. It was not only

felt as a grievance to be thus shut out from the body politic; but some were sincerely complaining of the spiritual privation of being excluded, themselves and their families, from the sacraments; on the other hand, the churches themselves felt weakened by the exclusion of many who could hardly be pronounced less fit for church fellowship than those who were within the pale.

“And yet it does not appear that there was any intent on the part of the Founders to draw lines excluding from the church any sincere disciple of Jesus Christ. The idea of establishing sectarian churches for a certain style of Christian from which other sorts of Christians should be excluded belongs to a later age, and would have been abhorrent to the first generation. They sincerely meant that all the faithful Christians of each town should be the church of that town, exercising all the functions of a church free of interference from without; but in seeking this worthy object they fell into two grave mistakes. 1. In their righteous reaction from the miserable corruption of the English parish churches they went to the opposite extreme, not only putting out the demonstrably unworthy, but keeping out those whose worthiness was not satisfactorily demonstrated.”

Very unwillingly did the early Puritans take any steps which made the relation of their churches sectarian; and this was one reason for their aversion to the making of creeds.

The faith of these early Congregationalists they regarded themselves as holding in common with the Reformed churches of the whole world. Their polity was their own. They might readily have said,

“Let us write the Polity of the Congregational Churches, and we care not who shall write their Creeds.”

#### IV. THE BURIAL HILL CONFESSION

The Michigan City Convention of 1846 and the Albany Convention of 1852 mark the renaissance of Congregationalism. The former expressed the new life of the west, and the latter was the first national Congregational gathering held outside of New England. The divergent polities of Massachusetts, with its more rigid independency, and Connecticut with its consociation system which had lent itself to the Plan of Union, flowed together with fresh tributaries from the west and northwest into a river like that of the Garden of Eden, and the confluent stream was that of a new and truly nationalized Congregationalism. The abandonment of the Plan of Union marked the rise of a new denominational consciousness, and gave to the west a new place in the Councils of the denomination. The approach of the close of the Civil War indicated the rise of new home missionary prospects and problems, and a new opportunity to make the denomination a national power.

The Convention of the Congregational Churches of the northwest, whose chief function is the election of directors of Chicago Theological Seminary, was in session in Chicago on April 27, 1864, when Rev. Truman M. Post, a delegate from St. Louis, introduced a resolution that in view of the results of the war "the crisis demands general consultation, co-operation, and concert among our churches, and to these ends, requires extensive correspondence among ecclesiastical associations, or the assembling of a National Congregational Convention." The Illinois General Association, in session at Quincy, May 27, 1864, took official action, inviting other state bodies to unite in promoting "a National Convention." Dur-

ing that summer and autumn the state organizations of Indiana, Michigan, Iowa, Ohio, Rhode Island, Maine, Connecticut, Vermont, Massachusetts, New York, and Minnesota ratified the plan in the order named. On November 16, 1864, the joint committee representing the state bodies met in Broadway Tabernacle, New York, and arranged for the call of "a National Council to be assembled in Boston on the second Wednesday of June, 1865. A committee of three was appointed to report to the Council "a statement of Congregational church polity," the committee consisting of Rev. Messrs. Leonard Bacon, A. H. Quint, and H. M. Storrs. Another committee was appointed to consider "the expediency of setting forth a declaration of faith, as held in common by the Congregational churches." This committee consisted of Rev. Dr. J. P. Thompson, Prof. G. P. Fisher, and Prof. E. A. Lawrence.

The National Council of 1865 was in every respect a notable gathering, and it is the only one of our great national assemblies of whose discussions we have a stenographic report. The body convened in the Old South of June 14, and two days later the Committee on Confession made its report. They stated that "they could not regard it as their function to prepare a confession of faith to be imposed by act of this or any other body upon the churches of the Congregational order." They quoted from the Saybrook platform regarding the Scriptures as the only rule of religion, and stated that while the faith of the Congregational churches was essentially Calvinistic, and hence in general accord with the confessions of Westminster and Savoy, there existed what Cotton Mather happily called "variety in unity," which the committee did not wish to disturb by a formulation of doctrines; but rather deemed it better to characterize in a comprehensive way the faith of the churches "for the substance thereof" in the ancient confessions of 1648 and 1680. They did, however, submit a certain recital of Congregational principles, and closed

with a statement which rather closely approximated a confession of faith, though carefully avoiding the form of such confession.

#### FIRST REPORT ON DECLARATION OF FAITH

The committee appointed by the preliminary conference to prepare a Declaration of Faith to be submitted to the Council, respectfully report:

That, in the light of the discussions of that conference upon the expediency of such a Declaration, and also of the general principles of our polity, they could not regard it as their function to prepare a Confession of Faith to be imposed by act of this, or of any other body, upon the churches of the Congregational order. "It was the glory of our fathers, that they heartily professed the only rule of their religion, from the very first, to be the Holy Scriptures;" and particular churches have always exercised their liberty in "confessions drawn up in their own forms." And such has been the accord of these particular confessions, one with another, and with the Scriptures, that we may to-day repeat, with thankfulness, the words of the fathers of the Savoy Confession, two centuries ago: while, "from the first, every, or at least the generality, of our churches have been, in a manner, like so many ships—though holding forth the same general colors—launched singly, and sailing apart and alone in the vast ocean of these tumultuous times, and have been exposed to 'every wind of doctrine,' under no other conduct than the Word and Spirit," . . . yet "let all acknowledge that God hath ordered it for his high and greater glory, in that his singular care and power should have so watched over each of these, as that all should be found to have steered their course by the same Chart, and to have been bound for one and the same Port; and that the same holy and blessed Truths of all sorts, which are current and warrantable amongst all the other churches of Christ in the world, are found to be our Lading."

Whatever the diversities of metaphysical theology apparent in these various Confessions, they yet, with singular unanimity, identify the faith of the Congregational churches with the body of Christian doctrine known as Calvinistic; and hence such Confessions as that of the Westminster divines, and that of the Savoy Synod, have been accredited among these churches as general symbols of faith.

It has not appeared to the committee expedient to recommend that this Council should disturb this "variety in unity"—as Cotton Mather happily describes it—by an attempted uniformity of statement in a Confession formulating each doctrine in more recent terms of metaphysical theology. It seemed better to characterize in a comprehensive way the doctrines held in common by our churches, than thus to individualize each in a theological formula. The latter course might rather disturb the unity that now exists amid variety. Moreover, little could be gained in this respect beyond what we already possess in the ancient formulas referred to, which, being

interpreted in the spirit in which they were conceived, answer the end of a substantial unity in doctrine, and have withal the savor of antiquity and the proof of use.

In the language of the Preface to the Savoy Declaration, a Confession is "to be looked upon but as a meet or fit medium or means whereby to express a common faith and salvation, and no way to be made use of as an imposition upon any. Whatever is of force or constraint in matters of this nature, causes them to degenerate from the name and nature of Confessions, and turns them from being Confessions of Faith into exactions and impositions of Faith!" Yet a common Confession serves the important purpose—the "neglect" of which the Savoy fathers sought to remedy—of making manifest our unity in doctrine, and of "holding out common lights to others whereby to know where we are."

With these views, as the result of prolonged and careful deliberation, the committee unanimously recommend that the Council should declare, by reference to historical and venerable symbols, the faith as it has been maintained among the Congregational churches from the beginning; and also that it should set forth a testimony on behalf of these churches, for the Word of Truth now assailed by multiform and dangerous errors; and for this end, they respectfully submit the following

#### Recital and Declaration.

When the churches of New England assembled in a general Synod at Cambridge in 1648, they declared their assent, "for the substance thereof" to the Westminster Confession of Faith. When again these churches convened in a general Synod at Boston, in 1680, they declared their approval (with slight verbal alterations) of the doctrinal symbol adopted by a Synod of the Congregational churches in England, at London, in 1658, and known as the "Savoy Confession," which in doctrine is almost identical with that of the Westminster Assembly. And yet again, when the churches in Connecticut met in council at Saybrook in 1708, they "owned and consented to" the Savoy Confession as adopted at Boston, and offered this as a public symbol of their faith.

Thus, from the beginning of their history, the Congregational churches in the United States have been allied in doctrine with the Reformed churches of Europe, and especially of Great Britain. The eighth article of the "Heads of Agreement," established by the Congregational and Presbyterian ministers in England in 1692, and adopted at Saybrook in 1708, defines this position in these words: "As to what appertains to soundness of judgment in matters of faith, we esteem it sufficient that a church acknowledge the Scriptures to be the Word of God, the perfect and only rule of faith and practice, and own either the doctrinal part of those commonly called the Articles of the Church of England, or the Confession or Catechisms, shorter or larger, compiled by the Assembly at Westminster, or the Confession agreed on at the Savoy, to be agreeable to the said rule."

And now, when, after the lapse of two centuries, these churches are again convened in a General Council at their primitive and historical home, it is enough for the first of those ends enumerated by the Synod at Cambridge—to wit, “the maintenance of the faith entire within itself”—that this Council, referring to these ancient symbols as embodying, for substance of doctrine, the constant faith of the churches here represented, declares its adherence to the same, as being “well and fully grounded upon the Holy Scriptures,” which is “the only sufficient and invariable rule of religion.”

But having in view, also, the second end of a public confession enumerated by the Cambridge Synod, to wit, “the holding forth of unity and harmony both amongst and with other churches,” we desire to promote a closer fellowship of all Christian denominations in the faith and work of the gospel, especially against popular and destructive forms of unbelief which assail the foundations of all religion, both natural and revealed; which know no God but nature; no Depravity but physical malformation, immaturity of powers, or some incident of outward condition; no Providence but the working of material causes and of statistical laws; no Revelation but that of consciousness; no Redemption but the elimination of evil by a natural sequence of suffering; no Regeneration but the natural evolution of a higher type of existence; no Retribution but the necessary consequences of physical and psychological laws.

As a Testimony, in common with all Christian believers, against these and kindred errors, we deem it important to make a more specific declaration of the following truths:

There is one personal God, who created all things; who controls the physical universe, the laws whereof he has established; and who, holding all events within his knowledge, rules over men by his wise and good providence and by his perfect moral law.

God, whose being, perfections, and government are partially made known to us through the testimony of his works and of conscience, has made a further revelation of himself in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments—a revelation attested at the first by supernatural signs, and confirmed through all the ages since by its moral effects upon the individual soul and upon human society; a revelation authoritative and final. In this revelation God has declared himself to be the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and he has manifested his love for the world through the incarnation of the Eternal Word for man's redemption, in the sinless life, the expiatory sufferings and death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour; and also in the mission of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, for the regeneration and sanctification of the souls of men.

The Scriptures, confirming the testimony of conscience and of history, declare that mankind are universally sinners, and are under the righteous condemnation of the law of God; that from this state there is no deliverance, save through “repentance toward God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ;” and that there is a day appointed

in which God will raise the dead, and will judge the world, and in which the issues of his moral government over men shall be made manifest in the awards of eternal life and eternal death, according to the deeds done in the body.

JOSEPH P. THOMPSON, }  
 EDWARD A. LAWRENCE, } Committee.  
 GEORGE P. FISHER, }

Boston, June 16, 1865.

The report did not meet with entire favor. It was immediately referred to another committee, which was subsequently enlarged so as to include the most distinguished theologians present in the Council. The whole question whether the Council should adopt a creed, and if so, what creed, was referred to this body, consisting of Rev. John O. Fiske, Prof. D. J. Noyes, Rev. Drs. Nahum Gale, Joseph Eldridge, and Leonard Swain, Dr. A. G. Bristol, Rev. J. C. Hart, Dea. S. S. Barnard and Rev. G. S. F. Savage, to which latter were added Profs. Samuel Harris, E. A. Park, E. A. Lawrence, Noah Porter, J. H. Fairchild, and Joseph Haven.

After several days of deliberation, this committee made its report. It shortened the preliminary statement, and lengthened the confession, and made it more than ever a testimony against "dangerous errors." Particularly, it reaffirmed "our adherence to the above named Westminster and Savoy Confessions 'for substance of doctrine.'" It further declared "our acceptance of the system of truths, which is commonly known among us as Calvinism."

The committee to whom was referred the report of the preliminary Committee on the Declaration of Faith made report as follows:

#### SECOND REPORT ON A DECLARATION OF FAITH

The committee, in presenting the following report to the Council, regret that time and circumstances would not allow them to prepare a condensed statement of the doctrines held by our denomination. We desire it to be distinctly understood that the brief confession of the faith which we held in concert with the great body of be-

lievers is in no sense designed to be regarded as a creed for our churches.

When the churches of New England assembled in a general synod at Cambridge, in 1648, they declared their assent, "for the substance thereof," to the Westminster Confession of Faith. When again, these churches convened in a general synod at Boston, in 1680, they declared their approval (with slight verbal alterations) of the doctrinal symbol adopted by a synod of the Congregational Churches in England, at London, in 1658, and known as the "Savoy Confession," which in doctrine is almost identical with that of the Westminster Assembly. And yet again: when the churches in Connecticut met in Council at Saybrook, in 1708, they "owned and consented to" the Savoy Confession as adopted at Boston, and offered this as a public symbol of their faith.

Thus, from the beginning of their history, the Congregational churches in the United States have been allied in doctrine with the Reformed churches of Europe, and especially of Great Britain. The eighth article of the "Heads of Agreement," established by the Congregational and Presbyterian ministers in England in 1692, and adopted at Saybrook in 1708, defines this position in these words: "As to what appertains to soundness of judgment in matters of faith, we esteem it sufficient that a Church acknowledge the Scriptures to be the word of God, the perfect and only rule of faith and practice, and own either the doctrinal part of those commonly called the Articles of the Church of England, or the Confessions or Catechisms, shorter or larger, compiled by the Assembly at Westminster, or the Confession agreed on at the Savoy, to be agreeable to the said rule."

In conformity, therefore, with the usage of previous Councils, we, the elders and messengers of the Congregational churches in the United States, do now profess our adherence to the above-named Westminster and Savoy Confessions for "substance of doctrine." We thus declare our acceptance of the system of truths [which is commonly known among us as Calvinism, and] which is distinguished from other systems by so exalting the sovereignty of God as to "establish" rather than take away the "liberty" or free-agency of man, and by so exhibiting the entire character of God as to show most clearly "the exceeding sinfulness of sin."

At the same time we re-affirm the fundamental principle of Congregationalism, that the Bible is "the only sufficient and invariable rule of religion;" that, in order to attain a faith which is "right and divine, the word of God must be the foundation of it, and the authority of the word the reason of it." We "ought to account nothing ancient that will not stand by this rule, and nothing new that will." "It was the glory of our fathers, that they heartily professed the only rule of their religion, from the very first, to be the Holy Scripture."

Besides thus expressing the faith which we hold as a denomination, we deem the present a fit occasion to express the earnestness of our sympathy with all those Christian churches who are agreed with us in the essential truths of the gospel; especially as

our common faith is now assailed by popular and destructive forms of unbelief, which deny the living and personal God, which reject the possibility of a supernatural revelation by Jesus Christ, which exclude the fact of sin and the hope of redemption.

Against these dangerous errors, we, in common with all Christian believers, confess our faith in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the only living and true God; in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, who is exalted to be our Redeemer and King; and in the Holy Comforter, who is present in the Church to regenerate and sanctify the soul.

With the whole Church, we confess the common sinfulness and ruin of our race, and acknowledge that it is only through the work accomplished by the life and expiatory death of Christ that we are justified before God, and receive the remission of sins; and that it is through the presence and grace of the Holy Comforter alone that we hope to be delivered from the power of sin and to be perfected in holiness.

We believe also in the organized and visible Church, in the ministry of the word, in the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, in the resurrection of the body, and in the final judgment, the issues of which are eternal life and everlasting punishment.

We receive these truths on the testimony of God, given originally through prophets and apostles, and in the life, the miracles, the death, the resurrection, of his Son, our divine Redeemer. This testimony is preserved for the Church in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, which were composed by holy men as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

We affirm our belief that those who thus hold "one faith, one Lord, one baptism," together constitute the one catholic Church, the several households of which, though called by different names, are the one body of Christ; and that these members of his body are sacredly bound to keep "the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace," and to dwell together in the same community in harmony and mutual fellowship.

We hold it to be a distinctive excellence of our Congregational system that it exalts that which is more above that which is less important, and by the simplicity of its organization facilitates, in communities where the population is limited, the union of all true believers in one Christian Church; and that the division of such communities into several weak and jealous societies, holding the same common faith, is a sin against the unity of the body of Christ, and at once the shame and scandal of Christendom.

We bless the God of our fathers for the inheritance of these doctrines which have been transmitted to us their children. We invoke the help of the divine Redeemer, that, through the presence of the promised Comforter, he will enable us to transmit them in purity to our children. We rejoice, that, through the influence of our free system of apostolic order, we can hold fellowship with all who acknowledge Christ, and act efficiently in the work of restoring unity to the divided Church, and of bringing back harmony and peace among all "who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."

We believe that these truths and this free spirit have blessed our country in the past, that they have made New England what she is in the present, and have carried her principles, by other denominations as well as our own, throughout the Union, while in our recent struggle they have largely contributed to redeem and save the nation.

In the critical times that are before us as a nation, times at once of duty and of danger, we rest all our hopes in the gospel of the Son of God. It was the grand peculiarity of our Puritan Fathers, that they held this gospel, not merely as the ground of their personal salvation, but as declaring the worth of man by the incarnation and sacrifice of the Son of God; and therefore applied its principles to elevate society, to regulate education, to civilize humanity, to purify law, to reform the Church and the State, to assert, to defend, and to die for liberty; in short, to mould and redeem by its all-transforming energy everything that belongs to man in his individual and social relations.

It was the faith of our fathers that gave us this free land in which we dwell. It is by this faith only that we can transmit it to our children, a free and happy, because a Christian, commonwealth.

We acknowledge the duty that is laid upon us by the Redeemer to carry this gospel into every part of this land and to all nations, and to teach all men the things which he has commanded us to observe and to do. May He to whom "all power is given in heaven and earth" fulfill the promise which is all our hope: "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." To him be praise in the Church forever, Amen.

For the committee.

JOHN O. FISK, Chairman.

As soon as the second committee had presented its report, the chairman of the previous committee, Dr. J. P. Thompson, moved its substitution for his own; but Rev. Uriah Balkam, who was from Maine, as was the chairman Dr. Fiske, opposed this motion, and actively moved for the adoption of the original report.

A vigorous discussion ensued. It began in a contest between the two reports, but it shifted to a debate on the name of Calvin.

Among the delegates to the Council were some who did not believe that the Council should adopt any creed. There were others who declared themselves satisfied with the confessions of 1648 and 1680. There were others insisted that if the Council should adopt a creed it should express very strongly its disapproval of what some other people did not believe,

and be sure that the Congregationalists proclaimed that they were Calvinists.

Among the delegates to the Boston Council, none spoke more cogently on the matter of a declaration of faith than Rev. Asa Turner of Iowa. He expressed his disappointment, from the standpoint of a minister working among home missionary fields, that the committee did not report a short, simple declaration, unencumbered with theological subtleties, or obscure references to earlier and unfamiliar creeds. He said,—

“I hoped, when the subject of a declaration of faith and of polity was proposed for the consideration of this Convention, that there would be a simple, comprehensive, common sense Declaration of Faith, written for the common people—not written for Andover or East Windsor, or for the theologians, but for the people; something that the people could understand, and feel that it expressed the truth of the Bible. . . . We do not want, in expressing our belief, to tell what our forefathers believed two hundred years ago; that will not satisfy the people of the West. . . . It has been my hope, but I fear I may be disappointed, that such a short and simple statement might be made that we could say as a Council ‘We believe it.’ We need not put in all we believe, but make it a statement of what we actually believe with reference to the most important doctrines of the Bible.”

Rev. Joshua Leavitt, of New York, moved to strike out the words “which is commonly known among us as Calvinism.” Rev. William W. Patton, of Illinois, heartily supported the motion, protesting against naming our denomination after John Calvin, or any other man. He was strongly supported by Rev. J. M. Sturtevant, of Illinois, who protested against being compelled to subscribe to any system of doctrine divisive among Christians.

Prof. Park, of Andover, for the time turned the tide in favor of the retention of the name of Calvin. He had been shut up in the basement of Mount Vernon Church in com-

mittee work, and had had less opportunity to enter into the discussion than he liked. He arrived in time to utter his opinion on this subject, to make one or two jocular references to "having been kept in a cellar for two or three days" and then in a short speech, which makes extraordinary reading after this lapse of time, he stood for the retention of the reference to Calvin. He said:

"The man who having pursued a three years' course of study, having studied the Bible in the original languages, is not a Calvinist, is not a respectable man." He declared that unless the Council adopted the Confession with that word in it, the Council would become "a hissing and a by-word!"

For the moment the Council seemed to agree with Prof. Park, and took recess; but its awe of his wit and ridicule passed.

It was Rev. A. H. Quint who determined to cut the knot. He held hurried consultations with members of the Business Committee, and they determined to prepare a new declaration. This was a daring and unauthorized act, and its justification is to be found in its utility and its success. There was scant time in which to do it, and the Council had not charged the Business Committee with any responsibility in the matter; but the plan worked out admirably. The plan was to prepare a Confession of Faith which should dwell chiefly on our essential union of doctrine and purpose with the Pilgrims, and then to state our own faith in reasonably modern language.

So, while the delegates were standing on Burial Hill, where once had stood the old Pilgrim church which was also their fort, Colonel Hammond of Illinois, assistant moderator, took the chair, and Dr. Quint said:

"I have been directed by the Business Committee to read a paper which is in their hands. The idea was entertained that it might possibly meet the views of all present. If it did, well; if it did not, it could be quietly dropped."

Then he began to read:

“ Standing by the rock where the Pilgrims set foot upon these shores, upon the spot where they worshipped God, and among the graves of the early generations, we, Elders and Messengers of the Congregational Churches of the United States, like them acknowledging no rule of faith but the Word of God, do now reiterate our adherence to the faith and order of the Apostolic and Primitive Churches as held by our fathers,”—

After such an introduction, it is little wonder the Council adopted the Confession.

Mr. Quint had as his material the reports of the two previous committees, and the suggestions of the discussions; but he was a member of other committees, and had scant time to work his material into shape, and less time to confer with other members of the Committee. It is literally true as Dr. Quint informed the present writer, that the fine introduction was actually written on his hat, as the train was enroute for Plymouth.

There is much in taking advantage of the psychological moment. Delegates who had listened to the discussions of the two reports missed from Dr. Quint's report the phrases which had precipitated warm difference of opinion, and were favorably inclined by every condition of their journey to consider the report which he submitted. One delegate protested, in the name of the Pilgrim dead, against a creed so sectarian in spirit, and filed his protest in writing next day; but his single voice, while courteously listened to, was far outvoted. Like the Kansas City declaration, the Burial Hill Confession was adopted with only one vote against it.

### THIRD REPORT ON DECLARATION OF FAITH

The records of the National Council of 1865, record that on Wednesday, June 21, the Council adjourned with the Doxology, to meet at the Mt. Vernon Church to-morrow morning, at 9 o'clock, should the day be rainy; otherwise to meet on Burial Hill in Plymouth, at 11 A. M., and then proceed:—

Eighth Day; Thursday, June 22, 1865.

Council assembled between eleven and twelve o'clock, A. M., on Burial Hill, in Plymouth, Mass., and were called to order by Hon. C. G. Hammond, first Assistant Moderator. Prayer was offered by the Rev. David Bremner, pastor of the Third Church of the Pilgrimage in Plymouth.

The reading of the records was postponed until to-morrow.

Rev. Mr Quint, from the Business Committee, presented a paper as a substitute for that yesterday reported by the committee to whom was referred the report of the preliminary Committee on a Declaration of Faith, as follows:—

### Report.

Standing by the rock where the Pilgrims set foot upon these shores, upon the spot where they worshiped God, and among the graves of the early generations, we, Elders and Messengers of the Congregational Churches of the United States in National Council assembled, like them acknowledging no rule of faith but the word of God, do now [reiterate] our adherence to the faith and order of the Apostolic and Primitive Churches [as] held by our Fathers, and [as substantially embodied] in the Confessions and Platforms which our Synods of 1648 and 1680 set forth or reaffirmed. We declare that the experience of the nearly two and a half centuries which have elapsed since the memorable day when our sires founded here a Christian Commonwealth, with all the development of new forms of error since their times, have only deepened our confidence in the faith and polity of these Fathers. We bless [the] God [of our Fathers] for the inheritance of these doctrines, [which have been transmitted to us their children.] We invoke the help of the Divine Redeemer, that, through the presence of the promised Comforter, he will enable us to transmit them, in purity, to our children.

In the times that are before us as a nation, times at once of duty and of danger, we rest all our hope in the gospel of the Son of God. It was the grand peculiarity of our Puritan Fathers that they held this gospel, not merely as the ground of their personal salvation, but as declaring the worth of man by the incarnation and sacrifice of the Son of God; and therefore applied its principles to elevate society, to regulate education, to civilize humanity, to purify law, to reform the Church and the State, and to assert and to defend liberty; in short, to mould and redeem, by its all-transforming energy, everything that belongs to man, in his individual and social relations.

It was the faith of our fathers that gave us this free land in which we dwell. It is by this faith only that we can transmit it to our children, a free and happy, because a Christian, commonwealth.

We hold it to be a distinctive excellence of our Congregational system that it exalts that which is more above that which is less, important, and, by the simplicity of its organization, facilitates, in

communities where the population is limited, the union of all true believers in one Christian Church; and that the division of such communities into several weak and jealous societies, holding the same common faith, is a sin against the unity of the body of Christ, and at once the shame and scandal of Christendom.

We rejoice that, through the influence of our free system of apostolic order, we can hold fellowship with all who acknowledge Christ, and act efficiently in the work of restoring unity to the divided Church, and of bringing back harmony and peace among all "who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."

[But] recognizing the unity of the Church of Christ in all the world, and knowing that we are but one branch of Christ's people—while adhering to our own peculiar faith and order—we extend to all believers the hand of Christian fellowship upon the basis of those fundamental truths in which all Christians [may] agree. With them we confess our faith in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the only living and true God; in Jesus Christ the incarnate Word, who is exalted to be our Redeemer and King; and in the Holy Comforter, who is present in the Church to regenerate and sanctify the soul.

With the whole Church, we confess the common sinfulness and ruin of our race, and acknowledge that it is only through the work accomplished by the life and expiatory death of Christ that [we] are justified before God, [and] receive the remission of sins; and [that it is] through the presence and grace of the Holy Comforter [alone that we] [hope to be] delivered from the power of sin, and [to be] perfected in holiness.

We believe also in [an] organized and visible Church, in the ministry of the word, in the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, in the resurrection of the body, and in the final judgment, the issues of which are eternal life and everlasting punishment.

We receive these truths on the testimony of God, given [originally] through prophets and apostles, and in the life, the miracles, the death, the resurrection, of his Son, our divine Redeemer—a testimony preserved for the Church in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, which were composed by holy men as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Affirming now our belief that those who thus hold "one faith, one Lord, one baptism," together constitute the one catholic Church, the several households of which, though called by different names, are the one body of Christ, and that these members of his body are sacredly bound to keep "the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace," we declare that we will co-operate with all who hold these truths. With them we will carry the gospel into every part of this land; and with them we will go "into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

May He to whom "all power is given in heaven and earth" fulfill the promise which is all our hope: "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." Amen.

Dea. Charles Stoddard, of Massachusetts, moved that this substitute be accepted and adopted; and also that it be placed in the hands of a committee whose duty it shall be to suggest any verbal alterations that may seem to be desirable not affecting the sense, to report before the dissolution of the Council. The motion was carried.

It was further moved that this committee be composed of one member from each State and Territory represented in the Council, and that they be chosen by ballot immediately after the preliminary exercises of the session of to-morrow morning. This motion was carried.

After prayer by Rev. Dr. Daggett, of New York, closing with the Lord's prayer, in which the Council joined, the Council adjourned with the singing of the Doxology, to meet in the Mount Vernon Church, in Boston, to-morrow at 8 A. M.

Ninth Day; Friday Morning, June 23, 9 A. M.

The Council was called to order by the First Assistant Moderator, Hon. C. G. Hammond, who offered prayer.

The minutes of the Council for Wednesday and Thursday were read, amended, and approved. Gov. Buckingham appeared and took the chair.

It was moved to reconsider the vote of yesterday, by which the appointment of a special committee of one from each State and Territory, to be chosen by ballot, to make needed verbal changes in the Declaration of Faith, was ordered; and the motion prevailed.

It was further moved to amend the motion thus brought back to the consideration of the Council by fixing the number of the committee at three, and changing the mode of their appointment to nomination by the Moderator and his two assistants.

Rev. Mr. Allen, of Massachusetts, asked leave to present the following protest, and that it be ordered to be entered on the minutes. And leave was granted, and the record ordered:  
Mr. Moderator,

Standing over the ashes of the Pilgrim Fathers, and on the summit of this Hill consecrated to their memory, I solemnly protest against the adoption of the paper here and now presented, as being too sectarian for their catholic spirit, and too narrow to comprehend the breadth of their principles of Religious Freedom.

GEO. ALLEN.

Dr. Quint was far-sighted enough to realize the importance of the Burial Hill Confession, and also not to over-rate it. In the January 1866 number of the Congregational Quarterly he summarized the work of the Council in a report beginning as follows:

“Amid the daily business of a body such as our Council of 1865, it is difficult to discern clearly the great object in view. The necessary working machinery, however simple, is prominent; minor or collateral questions are being discussed; the shaping of various measures confines the attention. To have a comprehensive view of its action, we must wait until the work has become completed, and the subordinate parts group themselves into their natural relations to the main purpose. Where church courts or congresses meet from year to year, a strict unity is not to be expected. They transact “business.” Our Council met for a specific object; it was called because the occasion demanded it, and not because the usual time had come round again. Hence it ought to have worked to a central purpose. We think it did. Looking back, now, upon it, its proceedings display a clear and simple unity. We think we recognize God’s hand in this, and we praise him for the results we expect, and which seem already to begin.

“We venture, for historical use, to group the actions of the Council, in this light.

“The great object of this convocation was well indicated in the vote of the ‘Convention of the Congregational Churches of the North-West,’ which was the first formal suggestion of such a meeting: for ‘the Congregational churches of the United States to inquire what is their duty in this vast and solemn crisis, such as comes only once in ages; and what new efforts, measures, and politics they may owe to this condition of affairs, this new genesis of nations.’

“A preliminary meeting of delegates, appointed for that sole purpose, issued the invitation, and also ventured to ask various persons to prepare papers on different subjects relating to the main purpose. The invitation to the churches was accepted, and the Council came into being.

“There was of course a necessary amount of friction in the organizing; but it was slight. Considering that we had no precedents ecclesiastical, and hardly an approach to such a

meeting since 1680, the common sense of the delegates was the only, but safe, reliance. Such rules were adopted as seemed necessary; but none which interfered with entire orderly freedom. Such officers and such committees were chosen as were needed, and no more.

“In prosecuting, as a denomination, the great work of evangelizing this nation, the first thing settled (not in the order of time, but of nature), was *the doctrinal basis* of the denomination. What are its ministers to teach? What do its churches hold? What faith are its messengers to carry to the people? This question was answered in the paper adopted at Plymouth. There had been discussion, free and full. The paper presented by the preliminary committee had been referred, and a new draft reported. On all the *phrases* in that draft there was not unanimity, although there was as to its *meaning*. A paper which embodied much of that, but in a new draft, avoiding the language which had excited differences, proved acceptable, and was solemnly adopted and again ratified.

“This declaration was merely a declaration. It legislated no new faith into existence; but simply stated what was the permanent and united belief of the churches. It imposed no tests whatever. It said only, *this* is the faith which we hold, as did our fathers. Nothing has occurred to modify our belief in the substantial truth of the old symbols.”

The Burial Hill Confession was approved by the National Council as no other confession ever had been. It was the first home-made confession to receive the approval of the churches as represented in a national gathering. All the previous Councils, save that at Albany in 1852, were confined to New England; and each of those that set out to make a new confession ended by adopting one ready-made, and leaving its acceptance more or less elastic.

But while the Burial Hill Confession was made to order, it did not wholly stand apart as an independent document.

In it the National Council did then and there "reiterate our adherence to the faith and order of the Apostolic and Primitive Churches as held by our fathers, and as substantially embodied in the Confessions and Platforms of 1648 and 1680 set forth or reaffirmed." It was and still is an open question whether the action at Burial Hill did more to give the Congregational Churches a new confession, or to bind its faith anew "for substance of doctrine" to the old confessions. There is no doubt which of these Dr. Quint intended to do. But while he believed in the value of a new confession, he felt the value of historic continuity, and also the force of the demand that the creeds of the past have appropriate recognition.

Dr. Quint always disclaimed any purpose of limiting the faith of the churches in 1865 to the forms in which the same essential faith expressed itself in 1648 and 1680. Nothing brought from him a more emphatic denial than the suggestion that the Burial Hill Declaration was a reaffirmation in detail of the Confessions of 1648 and 1680.

The Burial Hill Confession did two things. It said that the faith which the Pilgrims of 1865 held embodied the essential truths which the fathers held. They held what the Pilgrims held in the sense in which Beecher called himself a Calvinist,—he believed what he thought Calvin would have believed if Calvin were now living! That is about the sense in which the Burial Hill Confession reaffirmed the Confessions of 1648 and 1680, and in that sense all Congregationalists now reaffirm them. Our faith goes back along lines of a traceable historic development, and has come down to us through these channels. As honest historians we recognize it; as loyal sons of the Pilgrims we are glad of it.

But the Burial Hill Confession did another thing. It proclaimed that these older confessions, embodying as they do in the terminology of the seventeenth century the faith which has been true in all ages, did not embody that faith in the form

in which modern men could agree in the expression of it. Therefore it formulated a new creed, which set forth, quite hastily and imperfectly, but on the whole very admirably, the faith of the Pilgrims, as best it could be agreed upon by a company of representative Congregationalists assembled at Plymouth in 1865, and feeling the emotions of the historic surroundings, and the relief from the close room and the tension of the debate. That little confession embodied the substance of the confessions of 1648 and 1680, and the opposing views of two differently minded committees, together with the happy phraseology of the introduction which the car-wheels jolted out of Dr. Quint's pencil as he wrote on top of his hat. It was a very good confession, and much better made than most of the great creeds of the Church. If Dr. Quint's hat is not preserved in the Congregational Library in Boston, let us at least hope that his spirit survives in the younger men who knew and honored him, and who learned both polity and doctrine in discourse with him.

## V. THE OBERLIN DECLARATION

What is known as the Oberlin Declaration is not in any proper sense a Creed. The National Council of 1871 was called on the district provision in its letter missive that the Burial Hill Declaration should be the doctrinal basis of the National Council. Had that Council followed the precedents of councils *pro re nata*, it would have had to remain so; for no such council can change the letter missive, which is the charter of the Council. But at the very outset the National Council became a law unto itself, and refused to accept this condition of its organization. This is a matter of such importance as to justify the quotation in full of the official records preliminary to the organization of the National Council of 1871:

On the approach of the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrims, the Church of the Pilgrimage, at Plymouth, Mass., invited the churches to meet by delegates at New York, to consider the appropriateness of particular action in celebrating this fifth jubilee. Such a meeting was held March 2, 1870; and it appointed a general committee for its purposes, consisting of Hon. Edward S. Tobey, Rev. William W. Patton, D. D., Rev. Henry M. Dexter, D. D., Samuel Holmes, A. S. Barnes, Rev. Ray Palmer, D. D., and Rev. Alonzo H. Quint, D. D.; of which, the first named was chairman, Rev. Dr. Dexter, secretary, and Mr. Holmes, Treasurer.

Among the acts of this committee was the calling of a Pilgrim Memorial Convention, which met at Chicago, Ill., April 27, 1870, open to delegates from all the churches in the United States.

Of that convention, B. W. Tompkins, of Connecticut, was Moderator; Hon. E. D. Holton, of Wisconsin, Rev. Samuel Wolcott, D. D., of Ohio, and Rev. George F. Magoun, of Iowa, Vice Moderators; Rev. Henry C. Abernethy, of Illinois, Rev. Philo R. Hurd, D. D., of Michigan, and Rev. L. Smith Hobart, of New York, Secretaries; and Rev. William W. Patton, D. D., of Illinois, Dr. Samuel Holmes, of New York, Hon. C. J. Walker, of Michigan, James L. Kearnie, of Missouri, and Rev. Rowland B. Howard, of Illinois, Business Committee.

Among the resolutions adopted at that large convention were the following:—

Resolved, That this Pilgrim Memorial Convention recommended to the Congregational State Conferences and Associations, and to other local bodies, to unite in measures for instituting on the principle of fellowship, excluding ecclesiastical authority, a permanent National Conference.

The General Conference of Ohio was the first to propose definite action. That Conference appointed a committee (Rev. A. Hastings Ross being made chairman) to correspond with the other State organizations and propose a convention to mature the plan. The several State organizations approved of the proposed National organization, and appointed committees. The General Association of New York proposed that a meeting of these committees be held in Boston, December 21, 1870, and its committee (Rev. L. Smith Hobart, chairman) issued circulars to that effect. The Committee of the General Association of Massachusetts adopted the proposal, and issued invitations accordingly. The official record of that convention is herewith given.

In accordance with a call issued by a committee of the General Association of the Congregational Churches of Massachusetts, upon suggestion of the General Association of New York, Committees appointed by the several General Associations and Conferences in the United States, on the subject of a National Council, assembled in the Congregational Library Room, Boston, Mass., December 21, 1870, at 12 o'clock, noon.

Rev. Alonzo H. Quint, D. D., of Massachusetts, called the convention to order, and read the invitation under which the committees had convened.

Rev. L. Smith Hobart, of New York, Rev. Charles Secombe, of Minnesota, and Rev. Joseph A. Leach, of New Hampshire, were appointed a committee to nominate officers. They reported the following nominees, who were unanimously elected:—

Rev. Edwin B. Webb, D. D., of Massachusetts, Moderator; Hon. Amos C. Barstow, of Rhode Island, Assistant Moderator; Rev. William E. Merriman, of Wisconsin, Scribe; and Hon. Henry S. McCall, of New York, Assistant Scribe.

Prayer was offered by the Moderator.

The roll of delegates was made out, and as completed in the further sessions of the convention, is as follows:—

Maine.—Rev. Benj. Tappan; Rev. Charles C. Parker, D. D.

New Hampshire.—Rev. Josiah G. Davis, D. D.; Rev. Franklin D. Ayre; Rev. Cyrus W. Wallace, D. D.; Rev. Joseph A. Leach; Rev. George M. Adams; Rev. Henry E. Parker.

Massachusetts.—Rev. Alonzo H. Quint, D. D.; Rev. Samuel T. Seelye, D. D.; Rev. Edwin B. Webb, D. D.; Hon. Charles Stoddard; Hon. S. Angier Chace.

Rhode Island.—Rev. James G. Vose; Rev. James H. Lyon; Hon. F. W. Bicknell; Hon. Amos C. Barstow; Rev. Francis Horton.

Connecticut.—Rev. Davis S. Brainerd; Rev. Robert G. Vermilye, D. D.; Rev. Edward W. Gilman; Bro. Ralph D. Smith; Rev. Leonard Bacon, D. D.; Bro. Calvin Day.

New York.—Rev. L. Smith Hobart; Hon. Henry S. McCall; Rev. William I. Budington, D. D.

New Jersey.—Dea. Samuel Holmes.

Ohio.—Rev. George W. Phillips; Rev. Hiram Mead; Rev. Israel W. Andrews, D. D.

Michigan.—Rev. Jesse W. Hough.

Minnesota.—Rev. Charles Seccombe; Rev. Jas. W. Strong.

Wisconsin.—Rev. William E. Merriman.

Rev. Dr. Quint read the substance of the action taken by the several State Conferences on the subject of a National Council, and moved the following:—

Resolved, That it is expedient, and appears clearly to be the voice of the churches, that a National Council of the Congregational Churches of the United States be organized.

After full discussion, in which delegates from all the States represented expressed their views, the resolution was unanimously adopted.

The convention took a recess of half an hour.

On re-assembling, it was unanimously

Resolved, That a committee of five be appointed, to whom shall be referred all suggestions or papers, and who shall report in proper draft what is necessary to the organization of a National Council.

The following brethren were appointed the committee:—

Rev. Alonzo H. Quint, D. D., of Massachusetts; Rev. William E. Merriman, of Wisconsin; Dea. Samuel Holmes, of New Jersey; Rev. George W. Phillips, of Ohio; and Hon. F. W. Bicknell, of Rhode Island.

Informal discussion followed, on various points submitted to the committee; and the convention adjourned to meet to-morrow at 9½ o'clock, A. M.

Thursday, December 22, 1870.

The convention re-assembled at 9½ o'clock, A. M. Prayer was offered by Rev. Dr. Seelye, of Massachusetts, and Rev. Mr. Hobart, of New York.

The committee appointed to prepare a draft of action necessary to the organization of National Council, reported. Their report was accepted, and considered article by article. After some amendment, it was unanimously adopted, as follows:

Resolved, 1. That it is expedient, and appears clearly to be the voice of the churches, that a National Council of the Congregational Churches of the United States be organized.

Resolved, 2. That the churches are hereby invited to meet in Council, by delegates, to form such an organization, and constitute its first session at a place and time to be settled by a committee hereafter to be appointed, who shall give public notice thereof; and that delegates be appointed in number and manner as follows: (1.) That the churches assembled in their local conferences, appoint one delegate for every ten churches in their respective organizations, and one for a fraction of ten greater than one-half; it being understood that wherever the churches of any State are directly united in a General Association or Conference, they may, at their

option, appoint the delegates in the above ratio in General Conference, instead of in local Conferences. (2.) That in addition to the above, the churches united in any General Association or Conference, appoint by such Association, one delegate, and one for each ten thousand communicants in their fellowship, and one for a major fraction thereof. (3.) That the number of delegates be, in all cases, divided between ministers and lay-men, as nearly equally as is possible.

Resolved, 3. That a committee, consisting of seven persons, be appointed to prepare the draft of a proposed Constitution for the National Council, to be submitted for consideration at the meeting now called, and to be previously published in season for consideration at the meeting now called, and to be previously published in season for consideration by the churches, and that that committee be governed by the following directions:

(1.) That the name be as above.

(2.) That reference be made to the Declaration of Faith set forth at Plymouth, in the year 1865, as the doctrinal basis.

(3.) That a declaration be made of the two cardinal principles of Congregationalism, viz.: the exclusive right and power of the individual churches to self-government; and the fellowship of the churches one with another, with the duties growing out of that fellowship, and especially the duty of general consultation in all matters of common concern to the whole body of churches.

(4.) That the churches withhold from the National Council all legislative or judicial power over churches or individuals, and all right to act as a Council of Reference.

(5.) That the objects of the organization be set forth substantially as follows:—

To express and foster the substantial unity of our churches in doctrine, polity, and work; and

To consult upon the common interests of all our churches, their duties in the work of evangelization, the united development of their resources, and their relations to all parts of the kingdom of Christ.

(6.) That the number and manner of electing delegates be as now adopted in calling the first meeting.

(7.) That the session be held once in—years.

(8.) To provide as simple an organization, with as few officers, and with as limited duties as may be consistent with the efficiency of the Council in advancing the principles and securing the objects of the proposed organization.

Resolved, 4. That the churches throughout the country be notified of the action of this convention, and be requested to authorize their representatives in conferences to choose delegates as above.

Voted, That this committee be directed to determine the time and place of the first meeting of the Council, and issue the call.

Voted, That this committee be instructed to recommend a mode of providing for the expenses of delegates to the National Council.

Voted, That thanks be returned to the brethren in Boston, for their abundant hospitalities.

Voted, That the convention expresses to the directors of the American Congregational Association its sense of the value of the library rooms as a place of meeting.

Voted, That an official copy of these proceedings be published in religious periodicals.

The following persons were then chosen, by ballot, the committee to prepare the draft of proposed constitution, as ordered in the third resolve:—

Rev. Alonzo H. Quint, D. D., of New Bedford, Massachusetts, (Chairman.)

Rev. Pres. William E. Merriman, of Ripon, Wisconsin.

Rev. Prof. Samuel C. Bartlett, D. D., of Chicago, Illinois.

Dea. Samuel Holmes, of Montclair, New Jersey.

Major-General Oliver O. Howard, of Washington, District of Columbia.

Rev. William I. Budington, D. D., of Brookiyn, New York.

Hon. Amos C. Barstow, of Providence, Rhode Island.

After prayer, the convention adjourned sine die.

EDWIN B. WEBB, Moderator.

William E. Merriman, Scribe.

The Preliminary Committee decided to accept an invitation from the churches in Oberlin, Ohio, and issued the call of a National Council to meet there November 15, 1871.—Minutes of National Council of 1871, pp. 7-12.

The Oberlin Declaration is contained part in the Preamble to the Constitution of the National Council as thus adopted and in part on the Declaration of Unity which was adopted, and ordered “printed in close proximity to the Constitution.”

## CONSTITUTION

[Adopted Nov. 17, 1871.]

### Preamble to the Constitution.

The Congregational churches of the United States, by elders and messengers assembled, do now associate themselves in National Council,—

To express and foster their substantial unity in doctrine, polity, and work; and

To consult upon the common interests of all the churches, their duties in the work of evangelization, the united development of their resources, and their relations to all parts of the kingdom of Christ.

They agree in belief that the Holy Scriptures are the sufficient and only infallible rule of religious faith and practice, their interpretation thereof being in substantial accordance with the great doctrines of the Christian faith, commonly called evangelical. held

in our churches from the early times, and sufficiently set forth by former General Councils.

They agree in belief that the right of government resides in local churches, or congregations of believers who are responsible directly to the Lord Jesus Christ, the one head of the Church Universal and of all particular churches; but that all churches, being in communion one with another as parts of Christ's catholic church, have mutual duties subsisting in the obligations of fellowship.

The churches, therefore, while establishing this National Council for the furtherance of the common interests and work of all the churches, do maintain the scriptural and inalienable right of each church to self-government and administration; and this National Council shall never exercise legislative or judicial authority, nor consent to act as a council of reference.

#### DECLARATION OF THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH.

[Adopted in 1871.]

The members of the National Council, representing the Congregational churches of the United States, avail themselves of this opportunity to renew their previous declarations of faith in the unity of the Church of God.

While affirming the liberty of our churches, as taught in the New Testament, and inherited by us from our fathers, and from martyrs and confessors of foregoing ages, we adhere to this liberty all the more as affording the ground and hope of a more visible unity in time to come. We desire and propose to co-operate with all the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the expression of the same catholic sentiments solemnly avowed by the Council of 1865 on the Burial Hill at Plymouth, we wish, at this new epoch of our history, to remove, so far as in us lies, all causes of suspicion and alienation, and to promote the growing unity of council and of the effort among the followers of Christ. To us, as to our brethren, "There is one body and one spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling."

As little as did our fathers in their day, do we in ours, make a pretension to be only churches of Christ. We find ourselves consulting and acting together under the distinctive name of Congregationalists, because in the present condition of our common Christianity we have felt ourselves called to ascertain and to do our own appropriate part of the work of Christ's Church among men.

We especially desire, in prosecuting the common work of evangelizing our own land and the world, to observe the common and sacred law, that, in the wide field of the world's evangelization, we do our work in friendly co-operation with all those who love and serve our common Lord.

We believe in "the holy catholic Church". It is our prayer and endeavor that the unity of the Church may be more and more apparent, and that the prayer of our Lord for his disciples may be speedily and completely answered, and all be one; that by consequence of this Christian unity in love, the world may believe in Christ as sent of the Father to save the world.

Following is Dr. Quint's report of the Council of 1871, and of the preparation and purport of the Declaration of Faith:

“The Preliminary Committee appointed to prepare a draft of the Constitution were expressly instructed to insert a reference to the Plymouth Declaration of 1865, as the expression of faith. They reported the following paragraph:—

They [the churches] agree in belief that the Holy Scriptures are the sufficient and only rule of faith and practice; their understanding of the doctrines thereof, and their harmony with other parts of the church universal, being sufficiently expressed in the declaration of faith set forth in National Council at Plymouth in the year 1865.

“The declaration thus referred to consisted, mainly, of two parts, (1) a statement of our denominational doctrinal views, and (2), a statement of doctrine in which we are in harmony with other parts of the church. The first was specific, a reaffirmation “substantially” of our old confessions. The second embraced only the general doctrines of the church.

“The first sentence of the paragraph reported at Oberlin received some verbal amendments. The second sentence met with decided criticism. Objection was made to a reference to a document not familiar, and which itself referred the reader back to two other documents,—an objection which had force. But the real objection found utterance in a motion to add the words “as follows,” and then quote from the declaration of 1865, the section containing its second statement, viz.; our harmony with other parts of the church. But this would have taken a part as if it were the whole, and would have made the whole paragraph inconsistent in its parts. Various amendments were offered, and many others were waiting to be in order, when the particular session ended. On re-assembling, it was voted (on motion of the chairman of the preliminary committee which had reported the paragraph) to refer the report and proposed amendments to a special committee, who should also consider any and all proposals which any brother

might lay before them. The composition of that committee, Professor Bartlett, Hon. Elisha Carpenter, Hon. C. J. Walker, Rev. Dr. Dwinell, and Rev. Dr. D. T. Fiske, was a guarantee of a judicious result. They reported the following substitute:—

They [the churches] agree in belief that the Holy Scriptures are the sufficient and only infallible rule of religious faith and practice; their interpretation thereof being in substantial accordance with the great doctrines of the Christian faith commonly called evangelical, held in our churches from early times, and sufficiently set forth by former general Councils.

“And this statement was at once and unanimously adopted.

“It is only right to state that an article by the learned chairman [Dr. Bartlett] of the committee which reported this amendment, states that the intent of the committee was that the “interpretation” is “in accordance with,” “that is, conformed to, moulded and governed by—the evangelical doctrines.” He does not regard the intent of the vote to be what we do. We looked rather to the distinction between an *exhaustive* statement of views held by our churches, and a statement of faith sufficient for this practical union; and that, not the former, but the latter, was intended. As an exhaustive statement, many members would have steadily opposed it. As a basis of union, they were willing to concede it. And the moderator of the Council has expressed opinions agreeing with the sentiment of this article.

“That this literally sets aside our old Confessions, is not apparent. It says that ‘our interpretation’ is in ‘substantial accordance with the great doctrines of the Christian faith commonly called evangelical;’ but this we have always said. The statement is not a creed; it merely indicates a position. It can easily be received as meaning *only*, that our ‘interpretation’ is not limited by the ‘evangelical’ faith, but merely accords with it, and may go beyond it. It is to be remembered that this article does not purpose to define fully the faith of

the churches, but the *basis of union*. It is explanatory of the first sentence; viz., that the churches associate themselves in National Council. And, as to the basis of union, we believe that the honest intent of the vote by the Council was to make this union rest on the common evangelical faith, and not on any of the (minor) peculiarities which have distinguished us, as a whole, from other parts of the church catholic. And it implies a re-affirmation of what has been 'set forth by former general councils,' *so far as* they declare the common evangelical doctrines. We supposed that the phrase 'in substantial accordance with,' meant that the common evangelical faith and this basis of union were substantially one. If so, it is really a declaration of adherence to the historic faith of the church of Christ, as being a sufficient basis of denominational unity.

"This does not alter the faith of any church. Every one will hold the evangelical doctrines in its own preferred cast. It does not mean a compromise which is to omit everything to which any individual Christian objects. The evangelical doctrines are perfectly well defined. But the denomination declines to commit itself to the defence of any man's peculiarities,—Edwards, Hopkins, Emmons, Taylor, Tyler, or anybody else; or to the defence of any particular Confession as against any other great Confession. Variations from the well-known common faith of the Christian church, are left to their own adherents.

"This is a broad, catholic basis. We do not bind ourselves by any provincial creeds or teachers. All the great Confessions are in substantial accord as to essentials. In fact, the 'Heads of Agreement' put the doctrinal part of the Articles of the Church of England, the Westminster, and the Savoy, as equally satisfactory. Cotton Mather says our churches 'took all the occasions imaginable to make all the world know, that in the doctrinal part of religion they have agreed entirely with the Reformed Churches of Europe. And that they de-

sired most particularly to maintain the faith professed by the churches of Old England.' This catholic basis is therefore no novelty. Instead of throwing away the substance of any Confession, we really recognize the essential faith of the Christian church which is in all Confessions. We refuse to be a sect, and we are loyal to the common faith.

"This is a great step, therefore, towards Christian union. It tells all Christian people that we will not make our peculiarities a bar to the union of the separated parts of Christ's divided church. We can welcome union on the simple basis of the common faith. Whatever the immediate result may be, an act like this of a powerful denomination must eventually bear fruit, and in the mean time we have the satisfaction of knowing that our churches have done the right thing for Christian union.

"It removes difficulties in the way of evangelization. Probably many of us little understand how our laborers have been pelted with hard phrases out of the old Confessions, and especially in localities where union is indispensable to make one efficient church. True, our denomination has never done more than to accept, for *substance*, any Confession; but that awkward word 'substantially,' is a very hard word to make people understand, particularly if they do not want to understand it. Doubtless a man, in any church of any denomination, who accepts literally, just as a plain man would understand it, every phrase in the Westminster, would be a rare specimen. The churches have never proposed to do it. They have never, in any synod, imposed a creed on any man's conscience. But every troubler has felt at liberty to insist that our laborers shall defend every sentence of Confessions which were never adopted by sentences. For ourselves, we can continue to believe and teach that "no mere man since the fall is able in this life perfectly to keep the commandments of God,"—and to hold to this 'substantially,' that is, just as it means. But we are not at liberty to insist that all persons in fellow-

ship shall hold to this real inability, which the Confession makes 'utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good.' A real inability and a 'moral' inability are not causes of division, while the necessity of the work of the Holy Ghost is held by all.

"As a matter of fact, we had come to this years ago. We believe that our rapidly-increasing Missouri churches are practically organized on the 'common' section of the Declaration of 1865. We think that our Southern work is on the same basis. That is, we organize *Christian* churches on the old Congregational theory that the *Christians* of any locality should form the *church* of that locality. The new Kentucky churches were represented at Oberlin, and are Congregational in form, purely 'Christian' in doctrine. As to 'Old School' and 'New School,' this distinction was not at issue in the Oberlin Council; as obsolete, so far as fellowship is concerned, as it is in the Presbyterian church. The distinction was a different one; whether special Confessions of Faith should be re-affirmed as a basis of union, in such parts as distinguish them from the historic faith of the Christian church. The churches in Council decided to *say*, what they have been steadily *doing*.

"Possibly some may fear that this basis is too broad for safety. If they do, we can look at the intent of the words 'former general Councils.' What did they consider to be the common evangelical faith? The Council of 1865 was one of the 'former General Councils.' What it says of the 'common faith' is therefore pertinent. We quote it:

With them we confess our faith in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the only living and true God; in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, who is exalted to be our Redeemer and King; and in the Holy Comforter, who is present in the church to regenerate and sanctify the soul.

With the whole church, we confess the common sinfulness and ruin of our race, and acknowledge that it is only through the work accomplished by the life and expiatory death of Christ that believers in him are justified before God, receive the remission of sins, and through the presence and grace of the Holy Comforter, are delivered from the power of sin, and perfected in holiness.

We believe, also, in the organized and visible church, in the ministry of the Word, in the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper; in the resurrection of the body, and in the final judgment, the issues of which are eternal life and everlasting punishment.

We receive these truths on the testimony of God, given through prophets and apostles, and in the life, the miracles, the death, the resurrection, of His Son, our divine Redeemer,—a testimony preserved for the church in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, which were composed by holy men as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

“For ourselves, we believe the basis is at once broad, safe, and prophetic of great good to the work of the Master. If it opens the door to all manner of erude notions, as some intimate, we fail to see it. It by no means intimates that our churches have no peculiarities. The distinction is still clear between an exhaustive statement of all our doctrinal views, and a statement of what we regard as a sufficient *basis of union*. As to ourselves, it does not say that the Declaration of 1865 was not a correct representation. It does not leave us without Confessions, nor as admitting a vague and indefinable sentiment of an ‘Evangelical’ *residuum* which appears after taking out all that any one objects to. The faith of the Christian church is a perfectly well-defined faith, from which heresies have been rejected. And we prefer, as a basis of union, the catholic faith, not modified by provincialism.

“It was in the line of catholicity that the Council set forth too the paper on the unity of the church, to accompany its constitution.”—*Congregational Quarterly*, 1872.

## VI. THE CREED OF 1883.

Good as the Burial Hill Confession was, its limitations were manifest. As the years went by it became increasingly evident that a new confession of faith was desirable. Few local churches felt like adopting the Burial Hill Confession with its vague allusions to the confessions of 1648 and 1680. New churches were rising, particularly in the West, and calling for brief and modern confessions of faith. The demand found voice in the Ohio Association, meeting at Wellington in May of 1879, setting forth the deficiency of previous declarations and calling upon the National Council to create "a formula that shall not be mainly a re-affirmation of former confessions, but that shall state in precise terms in our living tongue the doctrines which we hold to-day." The National Council which convened in St. Louis, November 15, 1880, appointed twenty-five commissioners to prepare a creed in accordance with this and similar demands. The Council chose the following: Pres. Julius H. Seelye, Prof. Charles M. Mead, Rev. Henry M. Dexter, Rev. Edmund K. Alden, Rev. Alexander McKenzie, Rev. James E. Johnson, Prof. George P. Fisher, Rev. George Leon Walker, Prof. William S. Karr, Prof. George T. Ladd, Rev. Samuel P. Leeds, Rev. David B. Coe, Rev. William M. Taylor, Rev. Lyman Abbott, Rev. Augustus F. Beard, Pres. William W. Patton, Pres. James H. Fairchild, Pres. Israel W. Andrews, Rev. Zachary Eddy, Prof. James T. Hyde, Rev. Edwin P. Goodwin, Rev. Alden B. Robbins, Rev. Constans L. Goodell, Rev. Richard Cordley, and Prof. George Moor.

There is not in all the above list a mean or unworthy name; and the list as a whole is one of note both as regards the

scholarship and the high character of the men composing it. The Commission devoted itself to its task with earnestness and with a high sense of responsibility to the churches. The report was presented in 1883, and was signed by all but three of the commissioners. Rev. Dr. E. P. Goodwin, of the First Congregational Church of Chicago, declined on the ground that he had been unable to attend the meetings of the Commission, but it is probable also that he was not wholly satisfied with its results. Prof. W. S. Karr declined to sign the report because the Confession did not adequately represent his views. The third commissioner who withheld his signature was Rev. E. K. Alden, secretary of the American Board. His motives were high and worthy, but it is impossible to contemplate his attitude toward the work of the Commission and his subsequent relation to the American Board without a measure of genuine sorrow. Dr. Alden felt that the creed was wholly inadequate as an expression of the faith to be preached by missionaries of the American Board, and the time came when the divergence of his view from that of the denomination as a whole became indisputably apparent, and resulted in his retirement from his position as secretary of the American Board.

The Creed of 1883 contains twelve articles, following the general order of the articles in the historic creeds. Its statements are clear; its language is free from theological subtleties; it says what it was intended to say. It begins with no reference to earlier confessions, but stands on its own feet as a direct and comprehensive statement of doctrine. It is impossible to read it thoughtfully without increased respect for the men who wrote it and admiration for the way in which they performed their task. Its thought and language are modern without any attempt to incorporate transeient phases of current thought. It sets forth the great doctrines in high relief, and is singularly free from obscurities and trivialities. It is altogether admirable in its sincerity, its clarity and its balance.

The churches hailed this new confession with great satisfaction, and hundreds of them immediately adopted it. It was sharply criticised both for what it contained and what it omitted. It is almost impossible to understand why any one should have objected to it, as some good men did, on the ground that it was not sufficiently evangelical. Gradually the opposition died down, and its place already secure in the affections of the Congregational churches became unassailable.

The report which the Commission published was dated December 19, 1883, and with its publication, the work of the Commission ceased. It was hardly referred to in the Council of 1886, excepting possibly in terms of censure in one or two of the addresses. No official action was taken concerning it. It made its way by reason of its own inherent worth and the confidence of the churches in the men who had wrought it. And it made its way surely, in the face of adverse criticism which at this day it is difficult to understand.

But by the time people ceased objecting to the Creed of 1883, the time for a new creed had come. There was little call and less occasion for a confession to take the place of the Creed of 1883; but there was a growing demand for a confession of faith more brief and less formal, to be employed for a wide variety of uses, for which the Creed of 1883 was not entirely available. The Confession of Faith adopted by the National Council at Kansas City in 1913 came at a time when some such confession was needed. If it shall serve its purpose as long and as well as did the Creed of 1883, all who had any share in its preparation or adoption will have sufficient reason to be grateful.

The report of the Commission of 1883 contained what the Commission called a Confession of Faith, but which was a proposed form of admission of members to local churches. In that form of admission, the credal statement was not the Creed of 1883, but the Apostles' Creed. This is an interesting fact, and shows how far the framers of the Creed of 1883 were from

expecting or desiring that their creed should be used as a test of fitness for church membership. The form of admission of members was hastily prepared, and was never accounted satisfactory, and was later superseded by another form, not much more so. But the report here given is that of the Commission as it was first published, including the very brief and modest introduction and postscript, the Creed, and the "Confession of Faith."

#### REPORT OF THE COMMISSION OF 1883 TO THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES

The undersigned, members of the Commission appointed under the direction of the National Council of the Congregational Churches of the United States, "to prepare, in the form of a creed or catechism, or both, a simple, clear, and comprehensive exposition of the truths of the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, for the instruction and edification of our churches" herewith submit to the churches the following

##### Statement of Doctrine:

I. We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible;

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who is of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made;

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who is sent from the Father and Son, and who together with the Father and Son is worshiped and glorified.

II. We believe that the providence of God, by which he executes his eternal purposes in the government of the world, is in and over all events; yet so that the freedom and responsibility of man are not impaired, and sin is the act of the creature alone.

III. We believe that man was made in the image of God, that he might know, love, and obey God, and enjoy him forever; that our first parents by disobedience fell under the righteous condemnation of God; and that all men are so alienated from God that there is no salvation from the guilt and power of sin except through God's redeeming grace.

IV. We believe that God would have all men return to him; that to this end he has made himself known, not only through the works of nature, the course of his providence, and the consciences of men, but also through supernatural revelations made especially to a chosen people, and above all, when the fullness of time was come, through Jesus Christ his Son.

V. We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the record of God's revelation of himself in the work of redemption; that they were written by men under the special guid-

ance of the Holy Spirit; that they are able to make wise unto salvation; and that they constitute the authoritative standard by which religious teaching and human conduct are to be regulated and judged.

VI. We believe that the love of God to sinful men has found its highest expression in the redemptive work of his Son; who became man, uniting his divine nature with our human nature in one person; who was tempted like other men, yet without sin; who by his humiliation, his holy obedience, his sufferings, his death on the cross, and his resurrection, became a perfect Redeemer; whose sacrifice of himself for the sins of the world declares the righteousness of God, and is the sole and sufficient ground of forgiveness and of reconciliation with him.

VII. We believe that Jesus Christ, after he had risen from the dead, ascended into heaven, where, as the one mediator between God and man, he carries forward his work of saving men; that he sends the Holy Spirit to convict them of sin, and to lead them to repentance and faith, and that those who through renewing grace turn to righteousness, and trust in Jesus Christ as their Redeemer, receive for his sake the forgiveness of their sins, and are made the children of God.

VIII. We believe that those who are thus regenerated and justified, grow in sanctified character through fellowship with Christ, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and obedience to the truth; that a holy life is the fruit and evidence of saving faith; and that the believer's hope of continuance in such a life is in the preserving grace of God.

IX. We believe that Jesus Christ came to establish among men the kingdom of God, the reign of truth and love, righteousness and peace; that to Jesus Christ, the Head of this kingdom, Christians are directly responsible in faith and conduct; and that to him all have immediate access without mediatorial or priestly intervention.

X. We believe that the Church of Christ, invisible and spiritual, comprises all true believers, whose duty it is to associate themselves in churches for the maintenance of worship, for the promotion of spiritual growth and fellowship, and for the conversion of men; that these churches, under the guidance of the Holy Scriptures and in fellowship with one another, may determine—each for itself—their organization, statements of belief, and forms of worship, may appoint and set apart their own ministers, and should co-operate in the work which Christ has committed to them for the furtherance of the Gospel throughout the world.

XI. We believe in the observance of the Lord's Day, as a day of holy rest and worship; in the ministry of the word; and in the two sacraments, which Christ has appointed for his church: Baptism, to be administered to believers and their children, as the sign of clearness from sin, of union to Christ, and of the impartation of the Holy Spirit; and the Lord's Supper, as a symbol of his atoning death, a seal of its efficacy, and a means whereby he confirms and strengthens the spiritual union and communion of believers with himself.

XII. We believe in the ultimate prevalence of the kingdom of Christ over all the earth; in the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; in the resurrection of the dead; and in a final judgment the issues of which are everlasting punishment and everlasting life.

The Commission also submit for the use of the churches in the admission of members, the following

#### Confession of Faith:

"What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people."

"Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father, which is in heaven."

"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Dearly beloved, called of God to be his children through Jesus Christ our Lord, you are here, that, in the presence of God and his people, you may enter into the fellowship and communion of his Church. You do truly repent of your sins; you heartily receive Jesus Christ as your crucified Savior and risen Lord; you consecrate yourselves unto God and your life to his service; you accept his Word as your law, and his Spirit as your Comforter and Guide; and trusting in his grace to confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, you promise to do God's holy will, and to walk with this Church in the truth and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Accepting, according to the measure of your understanding of it, the system of Christian truth held by the churches of our faith and order, and by this church into whose fellowship you now enter, you join with ancient saints, with the Church throughout the world, and with us, your fellow-believers, in humbly and heartily confessing your faith in the Gospel, saying:

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven; and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

(Then should baptism be administered to those who have not been baptized. Then should those rise who would unite with the church by letter. To them the minister should say:

Confessing the Lord whom we unitedly worship, you do now renew your self-consecration, and join with us cordially in this, our Christian faith and covenant.)

(The members of th Church present should rise.)

We welcome you into our fellowship. We promise to watch over you with Christian love. God grant that, loving and being loved,

serving and being served, blessing and being blessed, we may be prepared, while we dwell together on earth, for the perfect communion of the saints in heaven. "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

(Jude 24-25 is proposed as an alternative benediction.)

On this result, reached after full and prolonged deliberation, the Commission invoke the kindly consideration of their brethren, and the blessing of Almighty God.

Julius H. Seelye, D. D., Amherst, Mass.

Charles M. Mead, D. D., Andover, Mass.

Henry M. Dexter, D. D., Boston, Mass.

Alexander McKenzie, D. D., Cambridge, Mass.

James Gibson Johnson, D. D., Rutland, Vt.

George P. Fisher, D. D., New Haven, Conn.

George L. Walker, D. D., Hartford, Conn.

George T. Ladd, D. D., New Haven, Conn.

Samuel P. Leeds, D. D., Hanover, N. H.

David B. Coe, D. D., New York, N. Y.

William M. Taylor, D. D., New York, N. Y.

Lyman Abbott, D. D., Cornwall-on-the-Hudson, N. Y.

Augustus F. Beard, D. D., Syracuse, N. Y.

William W. Patton, D. D., Washington, D. C.

James H. Fairchild, D. D., Oberlin, O.

Israel W. Andrews, D. D., Marietta, O.

Zachary Eddy, D. D., Detroit, Mich.

James T. Hyde, D. D., Chicago, Ill.

Alden B. Robbins, D. D., Muscatine, Ia.

Constans L. Goodell, D. D., St. Louis, Mo.

Richard Cordley, D. D., Emporia, Kan.

George Moar, D. D., Oakland, Cal.

New York, December 19, 1883.

## VII. ENGLISH AND CANADIAN CONFESSIONS

### (1) THE ENGLISH DECLARATION OF 1833

As in the United States, so also in Great Britain; there was no attempt on the part of the Congregational churches to formulate a confession of faith for many generations after the publication of the Savoy Declaration. The English churches have been even more careful than the Congregational churches of America concerning movements which seemed to involve the right of any central body to impose a creed either upon a local church, or upon an individual member. But in 1830, after a period of denominational decline and a revival of denominational consciousness, a Congregational headquarters was established in London, and three years later a Declaration of Faith, which had been prepared by Rev. George Redford, D. D., LL.D., was accepted "as the declaration of the Congregational Body, with a distinct understanding that it is not intended as a test, or creed for subscription. It is a dignified, deep-spirited and evangelical utterance, and it still is printed in the Year Book of the Congregational Union of England and of Wales.

#### THE ENGLISH DECLARATION

The Congregational Churches in England and Wales, frequently called Independents, hold the following Doctrines, as of Divine authority, and as the foundation of Christian faith and practice.

They are also formed and governed according to the principles hereinafter stated.

#### PRELIMINARY NOTES.

1. It is not designed, in the following summary, to do more than to state the leading doctrines of faith and order maintained by Congregational Churches in general.

2. It is not proposed to offer any proofs, reasons, or arguments, in support of the doctrines herein stated, but simply to declare what the denomination believes to be taught by the pen of inspiration.

3. It is not intended to present a scholastic or critical confession of faith, but merely such a statement as any intelligent member of the body might offer, as containing its leading principles.

4. It is not intended that the following statement should be put forth with any authority, or as a standard to which assent should be required.

5. Disallowing the utility of Creeds and Articles of religion as a bond of union, and protesting against subscription to any human formularies, as a term of communion, Congregationalists are yet willing to declare, for general information, what is commonly believed among them; reserving to every one the most perfect liberty of conscience.

6. Upon some minor points of doctrine and practice, they, differing among themselves, allow to each other the right to form an unbiased judgment of the word of God.

7. They wish to be observed, that, notwithstanding their jealousy of subscription to Creeds and Articles, and their disapproval of the imposition of any human standard, whether of faith or discipline, they are far more agreed in their doctrines and practices than any church which enjoys subscription, and enforces the human standard of orthodoxy; and they believe that there is no minister and no church among them that would deny the substance of any one of the following doctrines of religion; though each might prefer to state his sentiments in his own way.

### PRINCIPLES OF RELIGION

1. The Scriptures of the Old Testament, as received by the Jews, and the books of the New Testament, as received by the Primitive Christians from the Evangelists and Apostles, Congregational Churches believe to be divinely inspired, and of supreme authority. These writings, in the languages in which they were originally composed, are to be consulted, by the aids of sound criticism, as a final appeal in all controversies; but the common version they consider to be adequate to the ordinary purposes of Christian instruction and edification.

II. They believe in one God, essentially wise, holy, just, and good; eternal, infinite, and immutable, in all natural and moral perfections; the Creator, Supporter, and Governor of all beings, and of all things.

III. They believe that God is revealed in the Scriptures, as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and that to each are attributed the same divine properties and perfections. The doctrine of the Divine existence, as above stated, they cordially believe without attempting fully to explain.

IV. They believe that man was created after the divine image, sinless, and in his kind perfect.

V. They believe that the first man disobeyed the divine command, fell from his state of innocence and purity, and involved all his posterity in the consequences of that fall.

VI. They believe that therefore all mankind are born in sin, and that a fatal inclination to moral evil, utterly incurable by human means, is inherent in every descendant of Adam.

VII. They believe that God having, before the foundation of the world, designed to redeem fallen man, made disclosures of his mercy, which were the grounds of faith and hope from the earliest ages.

VIII. They believe that God revealed more fully to Abraham the covenant of his grace; and, having promised that from his descendants should arise the Deliverer and Redeemer of mankind, set that Patriarch and his posterity apart, as a race specially favored and separated to his service; a peculiar church, formed and carefully preserved, under the divine sanction and government, until the birth of the promised Messiah.

IX. They believe that, in the fulness of the time, the Son of God was manifested in the flesh, being born of the Virgin Mary, but conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit; and that our Lord Jesus Christ was both the Son of man and the Son of God, partaking fully and truly of human nature, though without sin, equal with the Father, and "the express image of his person."

X. They believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, revealed, either personally in his own ministry, or by the Holy Spirit in the ministry of his apostles, the whole mind of God for our salvation; and that by his obedience to the divine law while he lived, and by his sufferings unto death, he meritoriously "obtained eternal redemption for us;" having thereby vindicated and illustrated divine justice, "magnified the law," and "brought in everlasting righteousness."

XI. They believed that, after his death and resurrection, he ascended up into heaven, where, as the Mediator, he "ever liveth" to rule over all, and to "make intercession for them that come unto God by him."

XII. They believe that the Holy Spirit is given in consequence of Christ's mediation, to quicken and renew the hearts of men; and that his influence is indispensably necessary to bring a sinner to true repentance, to produce saving faith, to regenerate the heart, and to perfect our sanctification.

XIII. They believe that we are justified through faith in Christ; as "the Lord our righteousness," and not "by the works of the Law."

XIV. They believe that all who will be saved were the objects of God's eternal and electing love, and were given by an act of divine sovereignty to the Son of God; which in no way interferes with the system of means, nor with the grounds of human responsibility, being wholly unrevealed as to its objects, and therefore incapable of becoming a rule of human duty.

XV. They believe that the Scriptures teach the final perseverance of all true believers to a state of eternal blessedness; which

they are appointed to obtain through constant faith in Christ, and uniform obedience to his commands.

XVI. They believe that a holy life will be the necessary effect of a true faith, and that good works are the certain fruits of a vital union to Christ.

XVII. They believe that the sanction of true Christians, of their growth in the graces of the Spirit, and meetness for heaven, is gradually carried on through the whole period, during which it pleases God to continue them in the present life; and that, at death, their souls, perfectly freed from all remains of evil, are immediately received into the presence of Christ.

XVIII. They believe in the perpetual obligation of Baptism, and the Lord's Supper: the former to be administered to all converts to Christianity and their children, by the application of water to the subject, "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost;" and the latter to be celebrated by Christian churches as a token of faith in the Saviour, and of brotherly love.

XIX. They believe that Christ will finally come to judge the whole human race according to their works; that the bodies of the dead will be raised again; and that as the Supreme Judge, he will divide the righteous from the wicked, will receive the righteous into "life everlasting," but send away the wicked into "everlasting punishment."

XX. They believe that Jesus Christ directed his followers to live together in Christian fellowship, and to maintain the communion of saints; and that, for this purpose, they are jointly to observe all divine ordinances, and maintain that church-order and discipline which is either expressly enjoined by inspired institution, or sanctioned by the undoubted example of the apostles and of apostolic churches.

## (2) THE FREE CHURCH CATECHISM

The Free Church Federation grew out of a congress of members of Free Churches held in Manchester, England, in November, 1892. The causes for its development were the return of the churches to Christ Jesus as the sole and exclusive authority in the life of the soul and in the activities of the churches; the growing perception of an important difference between the essentials and non-essentials of Christian doctrine; the conviction of the dissenting churches that in union was strength in the isolated condition of the separate evangelical communions outside the Anglican establishment, and especially the need of a more sustained and united effort to carry the

Gospel to the people of the large towns and cities. A Federation of these churches including Baptists, Methodists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians and others, was formed in 1896. It has for its purpose the advocating of the New Testament doctrine of the Church and the defense of the rights of the associated churches and the promotion of the application of the law of Christ to every human relation. It has carried on important evangelistic movements, including those of F. B. Meyer and Gypsy Smith, and has led crusades against gambling, drunkenness, and social vice. It has been a power in the political life of Great Britain. In 1899 it adopted the Free Church Catechism, which has gained wide recognition in England and Wales, and has not been without influence in this country.

#### THE FREE CHURCH CATECHISM

1. Question.—What is the Christian religion?

Answer.—It is the religion founded by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Who has brought to us the full knowledge of God and of Eternal Life.

2. Q.—How must we think of God?

A.—God is the one Eternal Spirit, Creator and Sustainer of all things; He is Love, boundless in wisdom and power, perfect in holiness and justice, in mercy and truth.

3. Q.—By what name has Jesus taught us to call God?

A.—Our Father in Heaven.

4. Q.—What do we learn from this name of Father?

A.—We learn that God made us in His own image, that He cares for us by His wise providence, and that He loves us far better than any earthly parent can.

5. Q.—What does Jesus say about Himself?

A.—That He is the Son of God, Whom the Father in His great love sent into the world to be our Savior from sin.

6. Q.—What is sin?

A.—Sin is any thought or feeling, word or act, which either is contrary to God's holy law, or falls short of what it requires.

7. Q.—Say in brief what God's law requires.

A.—That we should love God with our whole heart, and our neighbor as ourselves.

8. Q.—Are we able of ourselves to do this?

A.—No; for, although man was made innocent at the first, yet he fell into disobedience, and since then no one has been able, in his own strength, to keep God's law.

9. Q.—What are the consequences of sin?

A.—Sin separates man from God, corrupts his nature, exposes him to manifold pains and griefs, and, unless he repents, must issue in death eternal.

10. Q.—Can we deliver ourselves from sin and its consequences?

A.—By no means; for we are unable either to cleanse our own hearts or to make amends for our offenses.

11. Q.—How did the Son of God save His people from their sins?

A.—For our salvation He came down from Heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into Heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father.

12. Q.—What benefit have we from the Son of God becoming man?

A.—We have a Mediator between God and men; one who as God reveals to us what God is; and, as perfect Man, represents our race before God.

13. Q.—What further benefits have we from our Lord's life on earth?

A.—We have in Him a brother man who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, as well as a perfect example of what we ought to be.

14. Q.—What did He accomplish for us by His death on the Cross?

A.—By offering Himself a sacrifice without blemish unto God, He fulfilled the requirements of Divine Holiness, atoned for all our sins, and broke the power of Sin.

15. Q.—What does the resurrection of Jesus teach us?

A.—It assures us that He has finished the work of our redemption; that the dominion of death is ended; and that, because He lives, we shall live also.

16. Q.—What do we learn from His Ascension into Heaven?

A.—That we have in Him an Advocate with the Father, Who ever liveth to make intercession for us.

17. Q.—What do we learn from His session at the right hand of God?

A.—That He is exalted as our Head and King, to Whom has been given all authority in Heaven and on earth.

18. Q.—How does Jesus Christ still carry on His work of salvation?

A.—By the third person in the blessed Trinity, the Holy Spirit, Who was sent forth at Pentecost.

19. Q.—What is the mystery of the blessed Trinity?

A.—That the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, into Whose Name we are baptized, are one God.

20. Q.—What must we do in order to be saved?

A.—We must repent of our sin and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

21. Q.—What is it to repent?

A.—He who truly repents of his sin not only confesses it with shame and sorrow, but above all he turns from it to God with sincere desire to be forgiven and steadfast purpose to sin no more.

22. Q.—What is it to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?

A.—It means that we rely on Him as our Teacher, Savior and Lord, putting our whole trust in the grace of God through Him.

23. Q.—How are we enabled to repent and believe?

A.—By the secret power of the Holy Spirit working graciously in our hearts, and using for this end providential discipline and the message of the Gospel.

24. Q.—What benefits do we receive when we repent and believe?

A.—Being united to Christ by faith, our sins are freely forgiven for His sake; our hearts are renewed, and we become children of God and joint heirs with Christ.

25. Q.—In what way are we to show ourselves thankful for such great benefits?

A.—By striving to follow the example of Jesus in doing and bearing the will of our Heavenly Father.

26. Q.—Where do we find God's will briefly expressed?

A.—In the Decalogue or Law of the Ten Commandments, as explained by Jesus Christ.

27. Q.—Repeat the Ten Commandments.

A.—(Repetition of the Commandments.)

28. Q.—How has our Lord taught us to understand the Law?

A.—He taught that the Law reaches to the desires, motives and intentions of the heart, so that we cannot keep it unless we love God with our whole heart and our neighbor as ourselves.

(1) Q.—What does the First Commandment teach us?

A.—To take the one living and true God for our own God, and render unto Him the honor which is due to Him alone.

(2) Q.—What does the Second Commandment teach us?

A.—To worship God in spirit and truth, not by the use of images or other devices of men, but in such ways as He has Himself appointed.

(3) Q.—What does the Third Commandment teach us?

A.—Never to blaspheme and never to utter profane words, but always to regard and use with deep reverence the Holy Name of God.

(4) Q.—What does the Fourth Commandment teach us?

A.—That we ought to be diligent in our calling during six days in the week, but keep one day hallowed for rest and worship; and because Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week, Christians observe that day, calling it the Lord's Day.

(5) Q.—What does the Fifth Commandment teach us?

A.—That God regards with special favor those who reverence and obey their parents.

(6) Q.—What does the Sixth Commandment teach us?

A.—To hold human life sacred, and instead of hating or hurting our fellow-men, even our enemies, to do all we can to preserve them in health and well-being.

(7) Q.—What does the Seventh Commandment teach us?

A.—To honor God's ordinance of marriage, to preserve modesty, and to keep ourselves chaste in thought, speech and behavior.

(8) Q.—What does the Eighth Commandment teach us?

A.—To be honest and fair in all our dealings, and in no wise to take unbrotherly advantage of another by fraud or force.

(9) Q.—What does the Ninth Commandment teach us?

A.—To avoid false testimony, and never to deceive anyone or spread reports to our neighbor's hurt.

(10) Q.—What does the Tenth Commandment teach us?

A.—Not even in our heart to grudge our fellowman his prosperity or desire to deprive him of that which is his, but always to cultivate a thankful and contented spirit.

29. Q.—What special means has God provided to assist us in leading a life of obedience?

A.—His Word, Prayer, the Sacraments, and the Fellowship of the Church.

30. Q.—Where do we find God's Word written?

A.—In the Holy Bible, which is the inspired record of God's revelation given to be our rule of faith and duty.

31. Q.—What is prayer?

A.—In prayer we commune with our Father in Heaven, confess our sins, give Him thanks for all His benefits, and ask, in the name of Jesus for such things as He has promised.

32. Q.—Repeat the Lord's Prayer.

A.—(Repetition of the Prayer.)

(1) Q.—What is meant by the words—"Hallowed be Thy Name"?

A.—That our Heavenly Father would lead all men to acknowledge and reverence Him as Jesus has made Him known, so that everywhere His glorious praise may be proclaimed.

(2) Q.—What do we pray for in the words—"Thy Kingdom come"?

A.—We pray that the Gospel may spread and prevail in all the world, till the power of evil is overthrown and Jesus reigns in every heart, and governs every relation of human life.

(3) Q.—What is meant by the words—"Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven"?

A.—That all men may be led to accept God's holy will, and cheerfully to do whatever He requires, so that his gracious purpose may be fulfilled.

(4) Q.—What shall we desire when we say—"Give us this day our daily bread"?

A.—That God would prosper our daily labor, and provide what is needed for the body, ridding us of anxiety and disposing us to contentment.

(5) Q.—Explain this petition—"Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

A.—Here Christ teaches us that we may confidently ask God to forgive us our sins, but that He will not do so unless we ourselves from the heart, forgive those who have wronged us.

(6) Q.—What do we ask for in the last petition—"Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil"?

A.—We entreat that we may not need, for our humbling, to be exposed to severe temptations, and that we may be kept from the power of every spiritual enemy.

33. Q.—What is the Holy Catholic Church?

A.—It is that Holy Society of believers in Christ Jesus which He founded, of which He is the only Head, and in which He dwells by His spirit; so that, though made up of many communions, organized in various modes, and scattered throughout the world, it is yet One in Him.

34. Q.—For what ends did our Lord found His Church?

A.—He united His people into this visible brotherhood for the worship of God and the ministry of the Word and the Sacraments; for mutual edification, the administration of discipline, and the advancement of His Kingdom.

35. Q.—What is the essential mark of a true branch of the Catholic Church?

A.—The essential mark of a true branch of the Catholic Church is the presence of Christ, through His indwelling manifested in holy life and fellowship.

36. Q.—What is a Free Church?

A.—A Church which acknowledges none but Jesus Christ as Head, and, therefore, exercises its right to interpret and administer His laws without restraint or control by the State.

37. Q.—What is the duty of the Church to the State?

A.—To observe all the laws of the State unless contrary to the teachings of Christ; to make intercession for the people, and particularly for those in authority; to teach both rulers and subjects the eternal principles of righteousness, and to imbue the nation with the spirit of Christ.

38. Q.—What is the duty of the State to the Church?

A.—To protect all branches of the Church and their individual members in the enjoyment of liberty to worship God, and in efforts to promote the religion of Christ, which do not interfere with the civil rights of others.

39. Q.—What is a Christian minister?

A.—A Christian minister is one who is called of God and the Church to be a teacher of the Word and a pastor of the flock of Christ.

40. Q.—How may the validity of such a ministry be proved?

A.—The decisive proof of a valid ministry is the sanction of the Divine Head of the Church, manifested in the conversion of sinners and the edification of the Body of Christ.

41. Q.—What are the Sacraments of the Church?

A.—Sacred rites instituted by our Lord Jesus to make more plain by visible signs the inward benefits of the Gospel, to assure us of His promised grace, and, when rightly used, to become a means to convey it to our hearts.

42. Q.—How many Sacraments are there?

A.—Two only; Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

43. Q.—What is the visible sign in the Sacrament of baptism?

A.—Water: wherein the person is baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

44. Q.—What inward benefits does this signify?

A.—The washing away of sin and the new birth wrought by the Holy Spirit in all who repent and believe.

45. Q.—What are the outward signs in the Lord's Supper?

A.—Bread and wine; which the Lord has commanded to be given and received for a perpetual memorial of His death.

46. Q.—What is signified by the Bread and Wine?

A.—By the Bread is signified the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ in which He lived and died; by the Wine is signified His blood, shed once for all upon the Cross for the remission of sins.

47. Q.—What do they receive who in penitence and faith partake of this Sacrament?

A.—They feed spiritually upon Christ as the nourishment of the soul, by which they are strengthened and refreshed for the duties and trials of life.

48. Q.—Why do Christians partake in common of the Lord's Supper?

A.—To show their oneness in Christ, to confess openly their faith in Him, and to give one another a pledge of brotherly love.

49. Q.—What is a Christian's chief comfort in this life?

A.—That in Christ he belongs to God, who makes all things work together for good to them that love Him.

50. Q.—What hope have we in the prospect of death?

A.—We are well assured that all who fall asleep in Christ are with Him in rest and peace; and that even as He rose from the dead, so shall we also rise and be clothed with glorified bodies.

51. Q.—What has Jesus told us of His Second Advent?

A.—That at a time known only to God, He shall appear again with power, to be glorified in His saints and to be the Judge of all mankind; and that for His appearing we should be always ready.

52. Q.—What is the Christian's hope concerning the future state?

A.—We look for the life everlasting, wherein all who are saved through Christ shall see God and inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

### (3) CANADIAN CONFESSIONS

The Congregational churches of Canada have never adopted a general confession of faith. The local use of creeds exhibits marked variety. Some have simple covenants containing brief allusions to the fundamentals in a few sentences. The confession most generally appealed to is the Commission's Creed of 1883, which has been adopted by a number of local churches and several times has been printed in the Canadian Year Book. In the language of Prof. E. Munson Hill, of Montreal, "It expresses the general belief of the Congrega-

tional churches of Canada, but is not binding and is not used as a test."

The most important document, which has received the assent of the Canadian churches is the doctrinal basis of the proposed union of the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational churches. This is a somewhat elaborate document containing twenty articles, much longer and more specific than the Dayton Creed, which was approved as the basis of the proposed union of the Congregational, United Brethren, and Methodist Protestant churches in the United States. The Congregationalists of Canada were generally opposed to such an elaborate statement as that proposed by the Presbyterians and finally agreed upon. The Presbyterian influence, however, carried the adoption of the declaration, and the Congregationalists secured a concession in the third section of the following declaration of the minister's relation to doctrine:

### III.—The Relations of a Minister to the Doctrines of the Church

1. The duty of final inquiry into the personal character, doctrinal beliefs, and general fitness of candidates for the Ministry presenting themselves for ordination or for reception as ministers of The United Church, shall be laid upon the Conference.

2. These candidates shall be examined on the Statement of Doctrine of The United Church, and shall, before ordination, satisfy the examining body that they are in essential agreement therewith, and that as ministers of the Church they accept the statement as in substance agreeable to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures.

3. Further, in the ordination service before the Conference these candidates shall answer the following questions:

(1) Do you believe yourself to be a child of God, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ?

(2) Do you believe yourself to be called of God to the office of the Christian ministry, and your chief motives to be zeal for the glory of God, love for the Lord Jesus Christ, and desire for the salvation of men?

(3) Are you persuaded that the Holy Scriptures contain sufficiently all doctrines required for eternal salvation in our Lord Jesus Christ, and are you resolved out of the said Scriptures to instruct the people committed to your charge, and to teach nothing which is not agreeable thereto?

With the foregoing declaration, which makes Holy Scripture and not the creed the test of a minister's qualification,

the following doctrinal statement has been approved, and may become the basis of a Canadian union of churches, so far as such a union has its basis in doctrine :

## THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

### The Basis of Union

As agreed upon by the joint committee of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches

### GENERAL

1. The name of the Church formed by the union of the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational Churches in Canada, shall be "The United Church of Canada."

2. It shall be the policy of The United Church to foster the spirit of unity in the hope that this sentiment of unity may in due time, so far as Canada is concerned, take shape in a church which may fittingly be described as national.

### DOCTRINE

We, the representatives of the Presbyterian, the Methodist, and the Congregational branches of the Church of Christ in Canada, do hereby set forth the substance of the Christian faith, as commonly held among us. In doing so, we build upon the foundation laid by the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. We affirm our belief in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the primary source and ultimate standard of Christian faith and life. We acknowledge the teaching of the great Creeds of the ancient Church. We further maintain our allegiance to the evangelical doctrines of the Reformation, as set forth in common in the doctrinal standards adopted by the Presbyterian Church in Canada, by the Congregational Union of Ontario and Quebec, and by the Methodist Church. We present the accompanying statement as a brief summary of our common faith, and commend it to the studious attention of the members and adherents of the negotiating Churches, as in substance agreeable to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures.

Article 1.—Of God.—We believe in the one only living and true God, a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable, in His being and perfections; the Lord Almighty, who is love, most just in all His ways, most glorious in holiness, unsearchable in wisdom, plenteous in mercy, full of compassion, and abundant in goodness and truth. We worship Him in the unity of the Godhead and the mystery of the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, three persons, of the same substance, equal in power and glory.

Article II.—Of Revelation.—We believe that God has revealed Himself in nature, in history, and in the heart of man; that He has

been graciously pleased to make clearer revelation of Himself to men of God who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit; and that in the fulness of time He has perfectly revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, who is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person. We receive the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, given by inspiration of God, as containing the only infallible rule of faith and life, a faithful record of God's gracious revelations, and as the sure witness to Christ.

Article III.—Of the Divine Purpose.—We believe that the eternal, wise, holy and loving purpose of God so embraces all events that while the freedom of man is not taken away, nor is God the author of sin, yet in His providence He makes all things work together in the fulfillment of His sovereign design and the manifestation of His glory.

Article IV.—Of Creation and Providence.—We believe that God is the creator, upholder and governor of all things; that He is above all His works and in them all; and that He made man in His own image, meet for fellowship with Him, free and able to choose between good and evil, and responsible to his Maker and Lord.

Article V.—Of the Sin of Man.—We believe that our first parents, being tempted, chose evil, and so fell away from God and came under the power of sin, the penalty of which is eternal death; and that, by reason of this disobedience, all men are born with a sinful nature, that we have broken God's law and that no man can be saved but by His grace.

Article VI.—Of the Grace of God.—We believe that God, out of His great love for the world, has given His only begotten Son to be the Saviour of sinners, and in the Gospel freely offers His all-sufficient salvation to all men. We believe also that God, in His own good pleasure, gave to His Son a people, an innumerable multitude, chosen in Christ unto holiness, service and salvation.

Article VII.—Of the Lord Jesus Christ.—We believe in and confess the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and man, who, being the Eternal Son of God, for us men and for our salvation became truly man, being conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, yet without sin. Unto us He has revealed the Father, by His word and Spirit, making known the perfect will of God. For our redemption He fulfilled all righteousness, offered Himself a perfect sacrifice on the cross, satisfied Divine justice and made propitiation for the sins of the whole world. He rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven, where He ever intercedes for us. In the hearts of believers He abides forever as the indwelling Christ; above us and over us all He rules; wherefore, unto Him we render love, obedience and adoration as our Prophet, Priest and King.

Article VIII.—Of the Holy Spirit.—We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who moves upon the hearts of men to restrain them from evil and to incite them unto good, and whom the Father is ever willing to give unto all who ask Him. We believe that He has spoken by

holy men of God in making known His truth to men for their salvation; that, through our exalted Saviour, He was sent forth in power to convict the world of sin, to enlighten men's minds in the knowledge of Christ, and to persuade and enable them to obey the call of the Gospel; and that He abides with the Church, dwelling in every believer as the spirit of truth, of power, of holiness, of comfort and of love.

Article IX.—Of Regeneration.—We believe in the necessity of regeneration, whereby we are made new creatures in Christ Jesus by the Spirit of God, who imparts spiritual life by the gracious and mysterious operation of His power, using as the ordinary means the truths of His word and the ordinances of divine appointment in ways agreeable to the nature of man.

Article X.—Of Faith and Repentance.—We believe that faith in Christ is a saving grace whereby we receive Him, trust in Him and rest upon Him alone for salvation, as He is offered to us in the Gospel, and that this saving faith is always accompanied by repentance, wherein we confess and forsake our sins with full purpose of and endeavor after a new obedience to God.

Article XI.—Of Justification and Sonship.—We believe that God, on the sole ground of the perfect obedience and sacrifice of Christ, pardons those who by faith receive Him as their Saviour and Lord, accepts them as righteous and bestows upon them the adoption of sons, with a right to all the privileges therein implied, including a conscious assurance of their sonship.

Article XII.—Of Sanctification.—We believe that those who are regenerated and justified grow in the likeness of Christ through fellowship with Him, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and obedience to the truth; that a holy life is the fruit and evidence of saving faith; and the believer's hope of continuance in such a life is in the preserving grace of God. And we believe that in this growth in grace Christians may attain that maturity and full assurance of faith whereby the love of God is made perfect in us.

Article XIII.—Of Prayer.—We believe that we are encouraged to draw near to God, our heavenly Father, in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and on our own behalf and that of others to pour out our hearts humbly yet freely before Him, as becomes His beloved children, giving Him the honour and praise due to His holy name, asking Him to glorify Himself on earth as in heaven, confessing unto Him our sins and seeking of Him every gift needful for this life and for our everlasting salvation. We believe also that, inasmuch as all true prayer is prompted by His Spirit, He will in response thereto grant to us every blessing according to His unsearchable wisdom and the riches of His grace in Jesus Christ.

Article XIV.—Of the Law of God.—We believe that the moral law of God, summarized in the Ten Commandments, testified to by the prophets and unfolded in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, stands forever in truth and equity, and is not made void by faith, but on the contrary is established thereby. We believe that God requires of every man to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly

with God; and that only through this harmony with the will of God shall be fulfilled that brotherhood of man wherein the kingdom of God is to be made manifest.

Article XV.—Of the Church.—We acknowledge one holy catholic Church, the innumerable company of saints of every age and nation, who, being united by the Holy Spirit to Christ their Head are one body in Him and have communion with their Lord and with one another. Further, we receive it as the will of Christ that His Church on earth should exist as a visible and sacred brotherhood, consisting of those who profess faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to Him, together with their children, and other baptized children, and organized for the confession of His name, for the public worship of God, for the administration of the sacraments, for the upbuilding of the saints, and for the universal propagation of the Gospel; and we acknowledge as a part, more or less pure, of this universal brotherhood, every particular Church throughout the world which profess this faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to Him as divine Lord and Saviour.

Article XVI.—Of the Sacraments.—We acknowledge two sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which were instituted by Christ, to be of perpetual obligation as signs and seals of the covenant ratified in His precious blood, as means of grace, by which, working in us, He doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and comfort our faith in Him, and as ordinances through the observance of which His Church is to confess her Lord and be visibly distinguished from the rest of the world.

(1) Baptism with water into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is the sacrament by which are signified and sealed our union to Christ and participation in the blessings of the new covenant. The proper subjects of baptism are believers, and infants presented by their parents or guardians in the Christian faith. In the latter case the parents or guardians should train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and should expect that their children will, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, receive the benefits which the sacrament is designed and fitted to convey. The Church is under the most solemn obligation to provide for their Christian instruction.

(2) The Lord's Supper is the sacrament of communion with Christ and with His people, in which bread and wine are given and received in thankful remembrance of Him and His sacrifice on the cross; and they who in faith receive the same do, after a spiritual manner, partake of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ to their comfort, nourishment and growth in grace. All may be admitted to the Lord's Supper who make a credible profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and of obedience to His law.

Article XVII.—Of the Ministry.—We believe that Jesus Christ, as the Supreme Head of the Church, has appointed therein a ministry of the word and sacraments, and calls men to this ministry; that the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, recognizes

and chooses those whom He calls, and should thereupon duly ordain them to the work of the ministry.

Article XVIII.—Of Church Order and Fellowship.—We believe that the Supreme and only Head of the Church is the Lord Jesus Christ; that its worship, teaching, discipline and government should be administered according to His will by persons chosen for their fitness and duly set apart to their office; and that although the visible Church may contain unworthy members and is liable to err, yet believers ought not lightly to separate themselves from its communion, but are to live in fellowship with their brethren, which fellowship is to be extended, as God gives opportunity, to all who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.

Article XIX.—Of the Resurrection, the Last Judgment and the Future Life.—We believe that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust, through the power of the Son of God, who shall come to judge the living and the dead; that the finally impenitent shall go away into eternal punishment and the righteous into life eternal.

Article XX.—Of Christian Service and the Final Triumph.—We believe that it is our duty as disciples and servants of Christ, to further the extension of His kingdom, to do good unto all men, to maintain the public and private worship of God, to hallow the Lord's Day, to preserve the inviolability of marriage and the sanctity of the family, to uphold the just authority of the State, and so to live in all honesty, purity and charity that our lives shall testify of Christ. We joyfully receive the word of Christ, bidding His people to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, declaring unto them that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and that He will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. We confidently believe that by His power and grace all His enemies shall finally be overcome, and the kingdoms of this world be made the kingdom of our God and of His Christ.

## VIII. THE DAYTON DECLARATION

The National Council at its session in Des Moines, in 1904, gave its Committee on Comity, Federation, and Unity, instruction on two special subjects: (1), To advance the federation of Christian churches in this country; and (2), To advance the union proposed between the Congregationalists, the United Brethren, and the Methodist Protestants.

On the subject of union with other denominations the National Council took the following action:

*“Resolved, That this National Council heartily approves the purpose and the general plan for the closer union of the Methodist Protestants, United Brethren and Congregational denominations; and that we accept the plan as presented by the committees of the three denominations, with the earnest hope that it may lead to a complete organic union.”*

Other action by the Council provided for the election of delegates and the first meeting of the General Council of the three denominations. In accordance with these directions the committees of the three denominations on Time and Place met in Pittsburg, Pa., August 20, 1905, and agreed to call the General Council of the three bodies at Dayton, Ohio, February 7-9, 1906. Accordingly the General Council met at that time and place, delegates having been appointed, in accordance with the direction of the last Council, by the Provisional Committee, the Congregational delegates present being 110 in number. On the opening of this General Council a resolution was presented by the Rev. T. H. Lewis, in behalf of the Methodist Protestants, declaring that “our first and chief business is to provide for the organic union of these three bodies,” and appointing large committees from each of these bodies on

Doctrine, Polity and Vested Interests, for the purpose of accomplishing this result. Three committees of 21 were thus appointed by each denomination, and were divided in each denomination into sub-committees of seven each. They met together, those of the three denominations on Doctrine, thus 21 in all; the three on Polity in the same way, and the three on Vested Interests. After much consideration, and the approval of each separate report by the combined committees, 63 in all, they were presented to the General Council, and voted on by the delegates of each denomination meeting separately. In this way the three denominations approved the report of the Committee on Doctrine; that on Polity was accepted as the basis for further consideration by the Committee; that on Vested Interests, which simply declared that they found no insuperable obstacles and desired time for further investigation, was approved. The subject of a name for the united body was left to a separate committee. The committees were continued, and with much enthusiasm and deep gratitude to God for the success of their labors the General Council adjourned to meet at the call of the chairman, the three committees on Creed, Polity and Vested Interests being authorized to continue their work in the meantime and report at the adjourned meeting.

The reports of the three committees, as accepted by the General Council, were widely published in the denominational journals and received much attention, discussion being especially directed to that on Polity.

The second General Council of the three churches was called to meet in Chicago, March 19-21, 1907, to hear the report of their committees. There were present 118 delegates appointed from the Congregational churches, and a proportionate number from the two other denominations. After full discussion for three days, by the sub-committees on Legal Relations, Publication Operations, Benevolent Societies and Educational Institutions, herewith appended, and the Committee

on Polity, and the further discussion of the reports in the full committee of sixty-three, in the presence of all the members of the Council who desired to attend, the following "Act of Union," reported by the special Committee on Polity, approved by the Committee of sixty-three in accord with the report of the Committees on Vested Interests and Legal Questions, and embracing the recommendations of the committees on Name and Doctrinal Statement, was unanimously adopted by the Council and recommended for adoption by the national bodies of the three denominations, as follows:

#### ACT OF UNION

Between the Congregational Churches, the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, and the Methodist Protestant Church.

We, the representatives of the Congregational Churches, the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, and the Methodist Protestant Church, believing that we can do more to promote the work of our Lord Jesus Christ in the world by uniting than by continuing our separate existence as denominations as heretofore, and being of one accord in the desire to realize our Lord's prayer, "that they all may be one," having already at the first meeting of this council entered into a common Declaration of Faith hereinafter set forth, do now, in order to bring about an organic union, propose to our respective denominations the Articles of Agreement hereinafter set forth.

#### DECLARATION OF FAITH

We, the representatives of the Congregational Churches, the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, and the Methodist Protestant Church, rejoice at this time to enter into union with one another, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the love of God, and for fellowship in the Holy Spirit. In this solemn act of faith and obedience towards the great Head of the Church, we do most humbly and confidently make confession of our faith and heartily renew the consecration of our lives to Him and to the service of mankind.

1. Our bond of union consists in that inward personal faith in Jesus Christ as our divine Saviour and Lord on which all our churches are founded; also in our acceptance of the Holy Scriptures as the inspired source of our faith and the supreme standard of Christian truth; and further, in our consent to the teaching of the ancient symbols of the undivided Church, and to that substance of Christian doctrine which is common to the creeds and confessions

which we have inherited from the past. But we humbly depend, as did our fathers, on the continued guidance of the Holy Spirit to lead us into all the truth.

2. We believe that God, the Father and Lord of all, did send his son Jesus Christ to redeem us from sin and death by the perfect obedience of his holy will in life, by the sacrifice of himself on the cross, and by his glorious resurrection from the dead.

3. We believe that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God and Christ, moves in the hearts of men, calling them through the gospel to repentance and faith, awakening in them spiritual sorrow for past sin and confidence in the mercy of God, together with new desires and a new power to obey his will.

4. We believe that those of the sons of men who, hearing God's call of divine love, do heartily put their trust in the Saviour whom his love provided, are assured by his word of his most fatherly forgiveness, of his free and perfect favor, of the presence of his spirit in their hearts, and of a blessed immortality.

5. We believe that all who are, through faith, the children of God, constitute the Church of Christ, the spiritual body of which he is the head; that he has appointed them to proclaim his gospel to all mankind, to manifest in their character and conduct the fruit of his spirit; that he has granted them freedom to create such offices and institutions as may in each generation serve unto those ends, and that for the comfort of our faith he has given to his Church the sacred ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

6. We believe that according to Christ's law men of the Christian faith exist for the service of man, not only in holding forth the word of life, but in the support of works and institutions of pity and charity, in the maintenance of human freedom, in the deliverance of all those that are oppressed, in the enforcement of civic justice, in the rebuke of all unrighteousness.

Possessed of these convictions, both as truths which we do most firmly hold and acts of faith which spring from our hearts, we do, therefore, in the happy consummation of this union, and in the name of all the churches which we represent, commit ourselves, body, soul, and spirit to the faith, love, and service of him who made us and saved us, the everlasting God, our Father, Redeemer, and Lord. To him be ascribed all praise, and dominion, and glory, world without end. Amen.

This Declaration of Faith, almost if not entirely the work of President W. Douglas Mackenzie, of Hartford Theological Seminary, met with immediate favor, and had the merger of the three denominations taken place, this would have been their confession of faith.

The Committee on Comity, Federation and Unity presented a full report to the National Council in Cleveland.

The action thus taken was widely published in the denominational press and elsewhere. The Congregational delegates in attendance appointed a committee, consisting of Dr. Washington Gladden, President W. Douglas Mackenzie and Dr. Asher Anderson, to prepare a letter to the churches detailing what was done and what was its purpose and bearing. This was done and the letter was widely distributed. Various conferences and churches took action on the subject in 1907, and recommended the following action:

*Voted:* That this National Council heartily approves the proposed Act of Union between the Congregational Churches, the Church of the United Brethren in Christ and the Methodist Protestant Churches and recommends that our conference and churches and our benevolent societies accept such corporate union between the three denominations.

*Voted:* That the Committee on Federation, Comity and Unity be authorized to act in behalf of this National Council for the purpose of aiding in the consummation of this proposed union and in the further advancement of the cause of comity, federation or unity of our various Christian bodies.

The proposed merger, however, did not meet with favor in the Council on the terms proposed. The final action at Cleveland was embodied in the report of a Committee of twenty-eight, as follows:

#### REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF TWENTY-EIGHT

The Committee of Twenty-Eight, to which was referred the report of the Committee on Comity, Federation, and Unity, begs leave to report that it has had that document under prolonged consideration. We express our high appreciation of the admirable rehearsal of the Federation movement and the Tri-Church Union movement, and the distinguished services of the committee to both causes. The resolution concerning federation, presented by the committee, has already been reported by the Council. For the rest, your committee now reporting recommends the adoption by the Council of the following minutes and resolutions:

The National Council of the Congregational Churches of the United States, in session at Cleveland, Ohio, October 8-17, 1907, having heard a remarkable volume of testimony from all parts of the

country, hereby records its conviction that our churches will go forward to consummate union with the Church of the United Brethren in Christ and the Methodist Protestant Church.

We recognize in the Act of Union adopted by the General Council of the United Churches at Chicago the fundamental principles by which such union must be accomplished. The aim of that act is the desire of our churches. The act provides for a representative council of the united churches, combines their benevolent activities, and conserves their vested interests. It makes provision for the gradual amalgamation of their state and local organizations, leaving the people of each locality free to choose their own times and methods for the completion of such unions. It contemplates, as the result of a continued fellowship of worship and work, a blending of the three denominations into one. This is the end to which the Act of Union looks forward, and these are essential means of its accomplishment.

We recognize, that, for the consummation of this union, each denomination is prepared to modify its administrative forms. Among our ministers and churches there have arisen divergent opinions both as to the interpretation of certain clauses and as to the effect of certain provisions in the Act of Union; while of some details therein proposed important criticisms have been made.

We recognize, further, that the other church bodies, when they convene for consideration of the Act of Union, may likewise find that certain of its features can be improved.

We, therefore, invite the other two denominations to unite with us in referring the Act of Union to the General Council of the United Churches, to afford opportunity for perfecting the plan of union; the General Council to report its results to the national body of each denomination.

We also recommend the adoption of the following resolutions:

1. That the Committee on Comity, Federation, and Unity to be appointed by this Council be authorized to act with representatives of the other two denominations in procuring the reassembling of the General Council of the United Churches, and also to act in behalf of the National Council in aiding the consummation of the proposed union, and in the further advancement of the cause of Comity, Federation, and Unity among various Christian bodies.

2. That, in case the committee on Comity, Federation, and Unity find it desirable to add to its members for special service, it have authority to do so.

3. That our membership in subsequent meetings of the General Council of the United Churches be thoroughly representative of our churches and elect in their state organizations, the securing of such elections on a proper ratio of representation in the various state bodies, and the filling of vacancies, to be in the hands of the Provisional Committee.

4. That a committee consisting of Rev. Drs. Washington Gladden, William Douglas Mackenzie, and William Hayes Ward be appointed to present this action to the United Brethren and the Methodist Protestant church.

The report is signed by all the members of the committee who were present at the conclusion of the discussion, namely:

Rev. Nehemiah Boynton, Chairman.

Rev. William E. Barton, Secretary.

Rev. C. S. Nash

Rev. Geo. E. Hall

Rev. C. S. Mills

Rev. Washington Gladden

Rev. W. D. Mackenzie

Rev. J. W. Bradshaw

Mr. C. H. Rutan

Rev. C. E. Jefferson

Rev. S. B. L. Penrose

Rev. J. W. Strong

Hon. J. M. Whitehead

Rev. C. L. Morgan

Mr. Rossiter W. Raymond

Rev. P. S. Moxom

Rev. A. T. Perry

Hon. J. H. Perry

Rev. W. H. Day

Rev. H. H. Proctor

Mr. W. H. Laird

Mr. E. P. Johnson

Mr. C. M. Vial

Mr. C. C. Morgan

The two other denominations then withdrew from the negotiations, and the proposed union came to a halt. Technically, the General Council of the three churches is still in existence, ready to go forward to organic union. Practically all thought of such union is now dismissed.

With the ending of the negotiations looking toward the union of the three denominations, the Dayton Declaration became less prominent as a Congregational Confession. It was several times proposed that it be incorporated in the National Council Constitution as the expression of faith of that body, but such use of it did not appear expedient, and a new confession of faith at length came into being in 1913.

## IX. THE KANSAS CITY CREED OF 1913

The Creed of 1913, sometimes called the Kansas City Creed, grew out of a revision of the Constitution of the National Council, prepared by a Commission of Nineteen on Polity appointed by the Council at Boston in 1910. The Commission consisted of the following:

President Frank K. Sanders, D. D., Kansas, Chairman  
Rev. William E. Barton, D. D., Illinois, Secretary  
President Charles S. Nash, D. D., California  
Professor Williston Walker, D. D., Connecticut  
Mr. William W. Mills, Ohio.  
Rev. Henry A. Stimson, D. D., New York  
Rev. Oliver Huckel, D. D., Maryland  
Dr. Lucien C. Warner, LL. D., New York  
Rev. Charles S. Mills, D. D., Missouri  
Rev. Rockwell H. Potter, D. D., Connecticut  
Hon. John M. Whitehead, Wisconsin  
Mr. Frank Kimball, Illinois  
Hon. Henry H. Beardsley, Missouri  
Prof. Henry H. Kelsey, D. D., Ohio  
President Edward D. Eaton, D. D., Wisconsin  
Rev. Nehemiah Boynton, D. D., New York  
Hon. Samuel B. Capen, LL. D., Massachusetts  
Hon. Arthur H. Wellman, Massachusetts  
Rev. Raymond Calkins, D. D., Maine.

The Committee on Constitution consisted of Rev. William E. Barton, D. D., chairman, President Edward D. Eaton, D. D., and Senator John M. Whitehead. The Commission made its

first report in a pamphlet distributed early in January, 1911, in which the article on "Faith" was as follows:

Believing in the love of God our Father, and in the revelation of that love in Jesus Christ our Lord, we confess our faith in Him; and living together in the fellowship and service of the spirit of God, will strive to know our duty as taught in the Holy Scriptures, and to walk in the ways of the Lord, made known and to be made known to us; and with loyalty to God, and love for all mankind, will labor for that righteousness which is profitable for the life that now is, and has promise for the life everlasting.

This was approved by the Commission and passed almost without criticism when circulated at large. For something like eighteen months the matter of the confession of faith developed practically no discussion until May 1912, when the Chicago Ministers' Union recommended that the Confession be made more Christological.

The publication of this resolution was the beginning of a general discussion of the Confession of Faith, as the result of which there appeared a general desire that the declaration be put into creedal form. It was then rewritten and approved by the Commission at a meeting in Detroit, in January, 1913, and again published for discussion. Interest in the Confession of Faith grew steadily, until that which at the beginning had been a quite inconspicuous part of the Committee's work became at the end the center of chief interest. After further discussion, and some amendment, it was adopted by the National Council at Kansas City, October 25, 1913. Though prepared with sole reference to its availability as a part of a business document, it has proved acceptable to the churches for other and varied uses, and is finding increasing favor by reason of its comprehensiveness and general adaptability. This Confession is as follows:

We believe in God the Father, infinite in wisdom, goodness and love; and in Jesus Christ, His Son, our Lord and Saviour, who for us and our salvation lived and died and rose again and liveth evermore; and in the Holy Spirit, who taketh of the things of Christ and revealeth them to us, renewing, comforting and inspiring the

souls of men. We are united in striving to know the will of God as taught in the Holy Scriptures, and in our purpose to walk in the ways of the Lord, made known or to be made known to us. We hold it to be the mission of the Church of Christ to proclaim the gospel to all mankind, exalting the worship of the one true God, and laboring for the progress of knowledge, the promotion of justice, the reign of peace and the realization of human brotherhood. Depending, as did our fathers, upon the continued guidance of the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth, we work and pray for the transformation of the world into the kingdom of God; and we look with faith for the triumph of righteousness and the life everlasting.

The opening sentence of the Constitution of the National Council declares "the steadfast allegiance of the churches composing this Council to the faith which our fathers confessed, which from age to age has found its expression in the historic creeds of the Church universal and of this communion." It has been asked whether there exists any conflict between this sentence and the creed itself. No such conflict exists. The allegiance thus declared is not to the creeds themselves, but to the essential faith which from age to age has been expressed, more or less adequately, in these earlier creeds. Of that same essential faith this latest creed is intended to be a simple expression. As men in earlier days confessed their faith, employing the language of their own times, "We having the same spirit of faith," "believe and also speak" in the language of our own generation. We dip our cups in the same stream from which they drank; but our faith is not in the eup, though we do not despise either their eup or our own; our faith is in the Fountain of truth, which has more of depth and volume than either their creed or ours could measure.

## X. SUMMARY OF CONGREGATIONAL USAGE

A recent and very wide survey of Congregational usage with respect to the employment of creeds and covenants may be briefly summarized. To the following statements there may be some few exceptions, but if so they are infrequent.

In the beginning no Congregational church had a creed. Both in England and in America, as well as while in exile on the continent, the Congregational churches were founded upon covenants entirely free from doctrinal affirmations. While these churches did not underestimate the value of correct thinking in doctrinal matters, they never made such thinking the test of fitness for membership in Christ's Church. They considered themselves in essential agreement, doctrinally, with other Christians, and had no thought or purpose of founding sectarian churches. This may be said to summarize a usage practically universal in Congregationalism for more than two hundred years from the rise of Congregational churches in England to the outbreak of the Unitarian controversy.

The early Baptist covenants appear generally to have been signed by members of the church. The Congregational covenants as a rule were not signed, but verbal assent to them was given. They were changed when new pastors came, and now and then a pastor thought himself able to improve upon the form of covenant he had previously employed and wrote a new one. It would appear that in Robert Browne's church a written covenant was read aloud and each section was explained by the minister, and then assented to by the brethren. Francis Johnson's covenant, of 1591, was written to be signed. Some of the early covenants contain the words, "We whose names are underwritten" but without signatures. The Old

South covenant would appear from its form to have been intended for signature, but was not subscribed. In a few instances the covenant was signed by the original members of the church, but those who joined later signified their assent to it verbally.

We have seen in what manner the members of the London church, established by Henry Jacob, consented to their covenant, standing in a circle with their hands joined.

It appears that the covenant document was generally written on a loose sheet of paper from which it could conveniently be read by the minister. Sometimes, as in the case of the Salem church, the minister wrote out as many copies of the covenant as there were members to be received.

There appeared in London in 1647, "A brief narration of the practices of the churches in New England." John Cotton quotes it in his "Way." In this it is stated that after members have made their individual confession of faith "they enter into a sacred and solemn covenant. . . . agreed on before amongst themselves, then read it before the assembly, and then either subscribe their hands to it, or testify by word of mouth their agreement thereto." This shows that such covenants were occasionally subscribed, but Lechford's "Plain Dealing" gives what was undoubtedly the rule: "And then the elder calleth all them that are to be admitted by name, and rehearseth the covenant on their part to them, which they publicly say they do promise by the help of God to perform. And then the elder, in the name of the church, promiseth the church's part of the covenant, to the new admitted members. So they are received or admitted."

We are reliably informed that when occasion seemed to justify it, a silent or implicit assent was accepted. In short, while the covenant idea was held in the very highest regard, there appears to have been little concern as to the form of the document or the manner of its acceptance. A reasonable degree of flexibility prevailed.

In its original intent, the covenant once assented to remained perpetually in force and needed no renewal, but it often occurred that covenants were renewed, with or without change in their phraseology. Sometimes a new pastor would ask the church to join him in a new and perhaps more explicit covenant, as Hugh Peter did at Salem. Sometimes a church, feeling that it had not been faithful to its covenant, would voluntarily renew the covenant. We have two accounts of the renewal of the Norwich covenant in 1669 and 1675, both recorded by Joseph Rix:

And in the Conclusion of the fast day [Dec. 28, 1669] it was moued by some brethren and so propounded by the Pastor to the Church to renue their Couenant which was asented vnto by the whole brethren present (except br. Kinge & br. Will Hardy who did both declare their desentt), notwithstanding the Church did proceed in the worke And the Pastor haueing mentioned the sume of the Couenant in shortt it was asented vnto by the whole by the signs of Lifting vp their hand except the two brethren before mentioned.

And towards the Close of ye day [Oct. 13, 1675] (as it was formerly Concluded) the Church did renue their Couenant after this manner. the Couenant was read out of this booke Contayning seuerall Articells being the same Couenant and Articells of Agreement that was entred into at ye first sitting down of this church in ye year of our Lord 1644, and after the reading thereof the whole church (then present) both brethren and sisters did, as a sign of their mutuall Couenant lift up their right hands, and so the meeting was concluded with prayer and thanksgiving vnto the Lord.—“Some Account of the Nonconformist Churches at Hail Weston & St. Neots,” etc., pp. 51, 52, and 54, 55.

It is interesting to find now and then a note which indicates with what good sense exceptions were made to the general custom of oral confession. In 1630, the church at Charlestown was organized and it later became the First Church in Boston. John Cotton, the pastor, made a profession of his own views, but asked for his wife that she be not required to submit to a public examination; whereupon she was asked if she assented to the confession made by her husband; and it is to be inferred that she did. Cotton Mather tells us that some were admitted by expressing their consent to the covenant, that others an-

swered questions propounded to them, and others wrote their own views, or delivered them orally, "Which diversity was perhaps more beautiful than would have been a more punctilious uniformity." *Magnalia*, I., iv., 7). We find an instance of a Mr. Lindall of Boston who wrote his profession of faith because "he had not an audible voice" and the pastor read it for him.

Our oldest Congregational covenants are mutual covenants, framed to be used at the organization of a church; but it is evident that before long, covenants were drawn in which response was made on behalf of the church. The oldest record we have of this is in Lechford's "Plain Dealing," published in London in 1642, in which he declares the custom in New England to have been that after the newly elected member had ascended to the covenant "the elder in the name of the church promiseth the church's part of the covenant to the new admitted members." It is interesting to find that thus early a response was made on behalf of the church. It appears, however, that in a great many churches there was no such response. Gilman in his article in *The Congregational Quarterly* in 1862, states that the Fitchburg formulas had no response of the church to the members, and that there was no such response in the First Church of Bangor before 1850, nor in Norwich First prior to 1817 or perhaps before 1825, nor in Norwich Second until 1829, nor in Torrington, Connecticut, in its Manual issued in 1852. The Rutland, Vermont, association in 1838 recommended "that the church rise in token of their cordial approbation, while the minister says, 'We do now publically declare our reception of you as a member of the Christian church, in full communion.'"

The churches West of New England seem quite uniformly to have had responses indicative of the reciprocal relationship established by the covenant. This appears to have been the case in Chicago First, Jackson and Detroit, Mich., and

other of the older churches, whose manuals were in frequent use as models for other churches.

Now and then, we find a church in which the church part of the covenant was not read by the pastor alone, but recited in unison by the whole body of the church membership. This has been the custom in First Church of Oak Park since its organization in 1863.

The Unitarian movement, while spiritually a secession from historic Congregationalism, became, by virtue of the unrighteous Dedham decision, a virtual secession of orthodox Congregationalism from churches that had become Unitarian. The old churches in becoming Unitarian retained their historic covenants in general without change, and the newly organized orthodox churches as a rule adopted creeds and required assent to them on the part of all their members. This was a natural but violent reaction against a condition which had cost the denomination the loss of so many churches and ministers, and it represented a departure from historic Congregationalism.

Center Church, New Haven, has undergone quite an evolution so far as creed and covenant is concerned. It was established by John Davenport upon the basis of a simple non-theological covenant, as was the case with the Boston and Salem churches. Later, a theological creed was introduced and was applied as a test of membership.

During the days of the Unitarian controversy, this creed became more and more Calvinistic. Later it was revised and finally the Apostles' Creed was substituted. This would not have been entirely objectionable, except for the fact that candidates, uniting on confession of faith, were required to express their belief through the medium of the Apostles' Creed. This, many persons, who were excellent Christians, were unable to do, and as a result a great number of men and women—some of the best in the community, thoroughly devoted to religion and loyal to Jesus Christ—were not church members.

Several years ago, when Davenport and Center Church united, the creedal test was entirely removed and the church went back again to a simple covenant, similar to that upon which it had been founded.

The creeds in effect at the time of this change were not abrogated. They were simply removed as tests. In other words, Center Church has held that there are two factors involved in church membership. In the first place there is that which is required of the candidate, and in this the church holds with the old Cambridge Platform that "The least measure of faith should be considered sufficient to render the candidate eligible to church membership, provided he show the Christian spirit." In the second place, there is that which the church offers to the candidate, and in this the church seeks to offer all that the past history of the Christian church can give.

In the history of our denomination, Park Street Church in Boston has an important, and for the purposes of this narrative, a distinguished and unique place.

Park Street Church was organized at a time when all our oldest Congregational churches in Boston, with the single exception of the Old South, had swung or were swinging into the Unitarian movement. Its services to the cause of orthodox Christianity can never be overrated, and it was natural that at that time it should have adopted terms of admission to membership based on doctrinal assent. It is probably this which caused the Old South and Federal Street to decline to participate in its public services of recognition. The creed which it adopted in 1811 was written by its first pastor, Dr. Griffin (*See Memoir of Dr. Griffin i, 102-6.*) was replaced in 1873 by a much more simple statement of belief; but while this simpler form sufficed as the basis for admission to membership, the church still required its minister and deacons to subscribe to the original statement of 1811.

That the plan adopted by Park Street involved a radical departure from historic Congregational precedence is beyond question. The founders of Park Street believed that the older system had proved inadequate to prevent the rise of Unitarianism, and that a new method involving stiff doctrinal conditions of membership was necessary. It was, however, not the laxness of the covenants which produced Unitarianism, but the hyper-Calvinism of the preaching of that period. It is a question therefore whether the right remedy was found for an admittedly grave evil. Commenting upon the organization of Park Street and the requirements for membership, Mr. Hill in his history of the Old South says :

“Until this time the terms of admission to membership in the churches of Boston had been plain and simple—repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Candidates had been required, not to give definite and particular assent to a system of divinity embodied in a dogmatic creed, but to enter into a covenant in the exercise of a living faith, and in a spirit of holy consecration, in solemn and beautiful language, adopted by the fathers when the broad foundations of New England Congregationalism were laid. It has been well said that creeds are for testimony, not for tests; but the new church was established on the principle that they are for tests, as well as testimony. It not only declared its adherence to the doctrines of religion as they are ‘in general clearly and happily expressed’ in the Westminster shorter Catechism, and in the Confession of faith of 1680, but it formulated these doctrines in a symbol of its own, emphasizing especially the tri-personality of the Godhead, election (with its necessary correlary—reprobation), and imputed righteousness. And it went further: It required subscription both to the general statements and to its own particular confession, as a condition precedent to membership.”—ii, 341.

A thoughtful survey of the situation with respect to creed subscription as a condition of church membership, was made

in an article by Rev. Edward D. Gilman, of Bangor, in the *Congregational Quarterly*, for April, 1862. He showed originally the Congregational churches had no creed, and set forth the exceptional instances in which confessions had been used among them. He quoted from many of the older covenants and showed how even in Franklin, Mass., during the whole of the pastorate of Dr. Emmons, to whom, perhaps, more than any one man, unless it were Dr. Griffin, of Park Street, Congregationalism was indebted for the idea of creed subscription as a basis of church membership, the sole doctrinal condition was in the most general terms, recognizing that "there are different apprehensions in the minds of great and wise men, even in the doctrinals of religion." He showed how in many churches the change had come about almost unconsciously. He illustrates this process by the church in Fitzwilliam, N. H., which originally had no creed, then in 1813 adopted one by a small majority, then in 1823 received people apparently without any statement of religious belief, and eighteen months later permitted a candidate to confess his faith in terms of the Confession of 1813 "in whole or in part as he might choose," and ended with the adoption of a briefer confession of faith. He showed this rather strikingly among other things that in proportion as creeds become a test they cease to be a testimony. One of two things seemed sure to happen; either the church disregarded its written creed, and assent to it became a mere form, or the creed came to be so abridged and modified as to cease to be explicit on any but the most fundamental of Christian doctrines stated in the broadest possible terms.

The westward movement of our denomination at the beginning of the nineteenth century was profoundly influenced by its association with Presbyterianism; and while the Congregationalists in the churches formed under the Plan of Union were more frequently of "the new school," they were, as a rule, organized in churches having creeds as well as covenants.

The churches west of the Hudson felt more strongly, as a rule, than did the Eastern churches the desirability of something approaching uniformity in the creeds adopted by local churches. These churches were organized in communities comparatively unfamiliar with Congregationalism and where churches of other denominations had creeds. The pressure upon the National Council in 1865 to formulate a declaration of faith came largely from the west. The same is true of the pressure under which the Creed of 1883 was formulated.

The work of the Commission which prepared the Creed of 1883 deserves high commendation, not only for that noble document, but also for the fact that in connection with it the Commission formulated what it called a Confession, so distinct in form and context from the creed that the churches which adopted the Creed of 1883 found it natural to distinguish between the creed, to be used as a testimony, and the confession or covenant, to be used as the basis of church membership. The fact that this form of admission never gave general satisfaction does not militate greatly against its value. It assisted greatly in the restoration of the right relation between creed and covenant.

In this return toward the earlier practice of our denomination, even the churches that were organized as a protest against Unitarianism have participated. Park Street Church was incorporated by act of the Massachusetts Legislature April 13, 1916, and under this incorporation consolidated the church and society which had been in existence for more than a hundred years. The church adopted a new set of By-Laws. The first article contains a belief doctrinal platform in which the church professes "our decided attachment" to the evangelical faith, which is defined in five brief declarations, followed by an acceptance of the Apostles' Creed "as embodying fundamental facts of Christian faith." The church has in addition, in Article II, a Confession of Faith in seven articles, the last of which is a covenant. Members are required to

“subscribe to the confession of faith of the Church, and give their public assent to the Covenant.” The Pastor and Deacons, instead of being required to assent to Dr. Griffin’s creed, now subscribe to the confession adopted in 1916. Following are these two interesting documents, which show a wide departure from the rigid standards in force at the beginning, but still a firm adherence to evangelical principles:

#### ARTICLE I.

We profess our decided attachment to that system of the Christian religion which is designated **EVANGELICAL**.

**WE BELIEVE** that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God and the all-sufficient rule of faith and practice.

**WE BELIEVE** that there is one and but one living and true God, subsisting in three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, equal in power and glory; that this triune God created all, upholds all and governs all.

**WE BELIEVE** that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Saviour of the World, and that through his life, death and resurrection an atonement was made for sin and redemption was provided for all mankind.

**WE BELIEVE** that repentance for sin and the acceptance of Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour is the one and only way whereby sinful man can inherit Eternal Life.

**WE BELIEVE** the Holy Spirit regenerates the soul of the believer and brings man into saved relations with God, and that He is the Comforter and Guide of all who receive Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour.

**WE BELIEVE** in what is termed “The Apostles’ Creed” as embodying fundamental facts of Christian Faith.

#### ARTICLE II., Section 2.

##### Confession of Faith

a. I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; and in the Holy Spirit, and that these three are one God.

b. I reverently receive the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and believe them to be the inspired Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

c. I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who, in the beginning “was with God,” and “was God,” and “who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree.”

d. I believe the Holy Spirit has led me to repent of all my sins, and to turn from them, and to obey Christ where he says, “If any man will come after me, let him take up his Cross and follow me.”

e. I believe in the resurrection of the dead, and in the final judgment of all men. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

f. I believe that we are saved "by grace through faith" in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that good works are the certain fruit of such faith. I therefore offer myself for Christian service as a means of expressing my gratitude to Him, and to extend His cause.

g. I cheerfully submit myself to the instruction and government of this Church, and I promise to promote its purity, peace and prosperity by all means within my power, so long as I shall continue to be a member of its communion.

The world will little heed nor long remember what kind of creed Park Street adopted in 1916. It might have reaffirmed its old confessions, though this would have been unlikely, or adopted the Creed of 1883, or the Kansas City Confession, or have made a new one, and not much attention would be paid to it. The world would expect that Park Street would continue evangelical, and under whatever forms of expression it might choose to adopt would witness a good confession. It would also expect that, however evangelical its new creed, if it should choose to make a new one, it would be a much shorter creed than that of 1811, and one framed to make it easy to accept all true Christians.

But what Park Street Church did in 1811 was not so readily overlooked. The Park Street confession, written by Dr. Griffin, became the type and model of confessions of faith used as tests of fitness for church membership. The Park Street Manual served as the basis for the manuals of Bowdoin Street, Pine Street, Essex Street and Mt. Vernon Churches of Boston; Harvard Church of Brookline; the First and Second Churches of Cambridgeport, Mass.; the old South, Worcester; Hammond Street, Bangor; the churches in Lockport and Bergen, New York; Plymouth Church, Cleveland; the First Church of Chicago, and scores and probably hundreds of others. These new churches became centers which furnished their manuals as models for newer churches; and thus the type reproduced itself.

Park Street still requires subscription to its articles of faith, but they now are very brief; and public assent is made, according to the By Laws, only to the Covenant. In manuals that have been received by the author from a large number of churches, there is no other than Park Street which has been revised in recent years that requires even this rather general assent to the creed.

Of churches established in recent years and of those that have recently revised their forms of admission of members, the practice approaches uniformity in this, that virtually all of them accept members on the basis of assent to the covenant, and use their creed, if they have one, as a testimony and not as a test.

The First Church of Oak Park affords an interesting and in some respects a typical illustration of Congregational usage with reference to the evolution of a creed.

The church was organized Feb. 17, 1863, and adopted nine "Articles of Faith," all of them brief, and as judged by the standards of that time liberal in spirit but in their content, then as now, thoroughly evangelical. Members of the church were expected to assent both to the Articles of Faith and to the Covenant, but so far as is known the Articles of Faith were never printed and were seldom publicly read. The Covenant, however, was printed on one side of a sheet of paper, distributed in the congregation, and from the beginning of the church, it was, as it still is, the custom for all the members of the church to rise when members are received and unite in repeating their portion of the church covenant.

In January, 1872, during the pastorate of Rev. George Huntington, D. D., the first Manual was issued, and at that time both the Articles of Faith and the Covenant underwent revision. There still were nine articles of faith, all of them brief, and covering article by article the doctrines embraced in the corresponding articles of the original Articles of Faith, but the phraseology of all the articles was changed and in

every case the change was in the interest of a somewhat more liberal interpretation, but with no compromise of orthodoxy. In this Manual another important change was made, and continues to the present day. Members of the church were not required to assent to the Articles of Faith, but were expected to have read them and to "assent to the substance of those doctrines" in a Confession still more brief.

In 1910, the Declaration of Faith was revised, the number of Articles reduced to seven, not by any essential omission but by condensation, and the Articles of Faith were prefaced by a statement in full accord with the long-established custom of the church; namely, that the declaration of faith was not to be used as a test of fitness for church membership, but as a testimony of faith and an expression of the spirit in which this church interprets the Word of God.

After the meeting of the National Council in Kansas City in 1913, the church adopted the Kansas City creed, which is now the Confession of Faith of the church.

ORIGINAL ARTICLES OF FAITH OF THE FIRST CHURCH OF  
OAK PARK  
1863—1872

(1) We believe in one God, the Creator, Preserver and Ruler of the universe, existing in three persons, the Father Almighty; the Son, God manifest in the flesh; and the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier and Comforter.

(2) We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, and contain the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

(3) We believe that mankind are in a ruined and lost condition through sin against God.

(4) We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, who is very God, assumed our nature, and by His suffering and death on the cross, made an ample atonement for the sins of the world, so that "whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

(5) We believe in the necessity of repentance, faith, and a new life to acceptance with God; that salvation is freely offered to all, and that all who truly repent and believe in Christ shall be saved, and that those who reject the Gospel will perish through their own impenitence and unbelief.

(6) We believe that the influences of the Holy Spirit are indispensable to make the truth effectual to the conversion of sinners

and the sanctification of believers, and that these influences are perfectly consistent with the free agency of man.

(7) We believe in the blessed fellowship of all true believers in Christ, and that a creditable evidence of a change of heart is an indispensable ground of admission to the visible church.

(8) We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ instituted the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper to be observed by His disciples; and that these, together with the Christian Sabbath, are a perpetual obligation.

(9) We believe in the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, the eternal life of all the saints in the Lord, and the eternal punishment of the wicked.

#### ORIGINAL COVENANT OF THE FIRST CHURCH OF OAK PARK 1863—1872

##### Covenant

You do now, in the presence of God and men, declare the Lord Jehovah to be your God, the supreme object of your affection and your chosen portion forever. You cordially acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ in all His mediatorial offices, Prophet, Priest and King, as your only Saviour and final Judge; and the Holy Spirit as your Sanctifier, Comforter and Guide. You humbly and cheerfully devote yourself to God in the everlasting covenant of grace; you consecrate your powers and faculties to His service and glory; and you promise, that through the assistance of His spirit and grace, you will cleave to Him as your chief good; that you will attend diligently on all the institutions and ordinances of the Gospel, and particularly the Lord's Supper, public worship and the social meetings of the church; that you will maintain secret prayer, and by example and effort encourage family devotion, and the strict observance of the Sabbath; that you will seek the honor of Christ's name and the interests of His kingdom; and that henceforth denying ungodliness and every worldly lust you will live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world.

You do now cordially join yourselves to this as a church of Christ, engaging to submit to its discipline, so far as conformable to the rules of the Gospel; and solemnly covenanting to strive, as far as in you lies, for its gospel peace, edification and purity, and to walk with its members in memberlike love, faithfulness, circumspection, meekness and sobriety.

(Here the members of the Church will rise.)

We, then, the members of this church of Christ, do now receive you into our communion, and promise to watch over you with Christian affection and tenderness, ever treating you in love, as a member of the body of Christ, who is head over all things to the church.

This we do, imploring the great Shepherd of Israel, our Lord and Redeemer, that both we and you may have wisdom and grace to be faithful in His covenant, and to glorify Him with the holiness which becometh His house forever.

THE SECOND DECLARATION OF FAITH OF THE FIRST  
CHURCH OF OAK PARK  
1872—1910

Article I.

We believe that there is one only living and true God; that He possesses in an infinite degree every attribute of perfection; that He is the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of the Universe; and that He is revealed in the Scriptures as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Article II.

We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament were written by inspiration of God; that they are a revelation of His will; and that they are the only authoritative Rule of Religious Faith and Practice.

Article III.

We believe that man was originally created in a state of moral innocence; that by voluntary transgression he became a sinner; and that without the regenerating grace of God he can never attain unto salvation.

Article IV.

We believe that Jesus Christ is both God and man; that by His sufferings and death He has made atonement for human sin; and that upon the ground of this atonement, pardon and salvation are bestowed upon those who repent of sin and believe in Him.

Article V.

We believe that all who exercise such repentance and faith are regenerated by special influences of the Holy Spirit; and that having been chosen in Christ from the foundation of the world, they will be kept by His power through faith unto salvation.

Article VI.

We believe that it is the duty and privilege of all such persons to make a public profession of their Christian faith, by uniting themselves to the visible Church of Christ.

Article VII.

We believe that the Gospel Ministry, the Christian Church, and the Christian Sabbath, are institutions of divine appointment, and will continue in force to the end of the world.

## Article VIII.

We believe that the ordinances which Christ has made binding upon the Church are Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

## Article IX.

We believe that there will be a resurrection of the dead and a general judgment; and that the wicked will go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal.

## ADMISSION OF MEMBERS

Persons desiring to become members of this Church, after having been examined and propounded in the manner heretofore prescribe in this Manual, shall be publicly received into the Church on some Sunday on which the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is observed, before the administration of that ordinance. They shall present themselves before the pulpit, as their names are called, and shall be thus addressed by the Pastor or by the Minister officiating:

Beloved Friends:

Having already read and considered the more formal statement of doctrine contained in our Articles of Faith, and having carefully compared it with your own views, you now assent to the substance of those doctrines in the following

## Confession.

We confess our reverent love and faith toward God our Heavenly Father, and toward the Lord Jesus Christ, our Blessed Saviour, and toward the Holy Spirit, our Divine Comforter.

We gratefully accept His Word as a message of love from Him, revealing to us the things which we most need and desire to know respecting His character and will, and respecting our obligations to Him.

We confess our sin and our unworthiness in His sight, and renounce all dependence upon our own works for salvation; though we esteem it both our privilege and our duty to render to Him every service in our power, and especially to honor His Truth, His Sabbath, His Church, and the Ordinances of His Religion.

We receive with implicit trust the offers which He has made to us in His word, of pardon through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of regeneration through the power of the Holy Spirit; and believing that we have experienced this pardon and regeneration, we look confidently to Him who is the resurrection and the life, and who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing, to save us from the second death, and to grant us an inheritance in His everlasting kingdom.

Thus you confess?

## Baptism.

[To those Uniting upon Profession.]

In accordance with the faith which you have now confessed, and with the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ, you are here to unite yourselves with His visible Church, under the ordinances and covenants which He has established?

[To those Baptized in Infancy.]

You who were dedicated to God in childhood by your believing parents, in the ordinance of Baptism, do now accept that act as your own, believing that the spiritual change which it signifies has been wrought within you by the Holy Spirit?

[To those not Baptized.]

You who trust that you have been renewed by the Holy Spirit, but who have never received the outward sign of regeneration, are now prepared to receive that sign in the ordinance of Baptism?

## Covenant.

Thus confessing and obeying Christ, and having already consecrated yourselves unreservedly to Him, you now renew that consecration in the presence of these witnesses, declaring the Lord Jehovah to be your God, the object of your supreme affection, and your portion forever. You solemnly surrender yourselves to Him as your only rightful sovereign. You devote to His service all your faculties, powers, and possessions, promising to make His will the constant rule of your life, and His glory the ultimate end of all your actions. You declare your purpose to make your own personal sanctification and Christian usefulness the standard by which to decide the lawfulness of all your worldly business and amusements; abstaining from every practice and pursuit which shall interfere with these ends, and attending conscientiously upon every ordinance and means of grace which shall enable you to secure them.

In accordance with these purposes, you do now unite yourselves with this Church of Christ, engaging to maintain and submit to its government and discipline, to co-operate with it in all good enterprises, and to promote, to the utmost of your power, its purity, its peace, and its prosperity.

Trusting in the grace of God, you thus covenant and engage?

[Here the Church will arise and Say,]

We then affectionately receive you as members with us of the Church of Christ. We bid you welcome, in His name, to all the blessings and privileges which are connected with this divine institution. We tender you our Christian communion and most cordial fellowship, cherishing a fraternal interest in your spiritual welfare, and desiring to aid you, by our sympathies, our counsels, and our prayers, in discharging the responsibilities which you have this day assumed.

[Here the pastor may give the right hand of fellowship to each person, with such words as he may think appropriate.]

[By the Pastor.]

And now may the Almighty Spirit help you to fulfill the covenant which you have made with Him and His people this day. The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.

### THE COVENANT IN INFANT BAPTISM

The ordinance of Infant Baptism, also, is administered with a mutual Covenant,—which has been in use in the First Church from 1872—and perhaps earlier—to the present time.

Children may be presented for Baptism on any Sunday on which the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is not administered. While they are brought forward, the following chant shall be sung:

#### Processional Chant.

1. And Jesus said, Suffer little children,  
and forbid them not to || come . . unto || me;  
For of || such . . is the || kingdom . . of || heaven.
2. He shall feed His || flock . . like a || shepherd;  
He shall gather the lambs with His arm  
and || carry . . them || in His || bosom.
3. I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed,  
and my blessing up- || on thine || offspring;  
And they shall spring up as among the grass,  
as || willows . . by the || water- || courses.

The Pastor or officiating clergyman shall then read to those who present their children for Baptism the following

#### Covenant of Parents.

These children, whom God has given to you, you now bring unto Him, that you may consecrate them to Him, and enter into covenant with Him in their behalf, engaging to be faithful to them in all spiritual things, and to seek by prayer, by instruction in the Scriptures, by admonition, by persuasion, and especially by a godly life and conversation, to lead them to a saving knowledge of Christ; and you recognize in this rite of Baptism the seal of that covenant, and the sign of the spiritual cleansing which it typifies?

Answer: We do.

The rite of Baptism having been administered, the Church shall arise and repeat the following

#### Covenant of the Church.

We also, as your fellow members in this Church of Christ, do join with you in the covenant which you make this day in behalf of

these your children. We recognize our relation to them as in a peculiar sense the children of the Church, desiring with you to watch over them, and to care for all their spiritual interests, laboring and praying for their salvation, that they may early become the subjects of that inward grace whose outward sign they have now received.

After prayer by the officiating minister, the following chant shall be sung, while the children retire:

#### Recessional Chant.

1. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you,  
and || ye shall . . be || clean;  
A new heart also will I give you,  
and a new spirit || will I || put with- || in you.
2. The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting  
upon || them that || fear Him,  
And His righteousness || unto || children's || children.
3. To such as || keep His || covenant,  
And to those that remember His  
com- || mand . . ments to ||do them . . A- || men.

#### THE THIRD DECLARATION OF FAITH OF THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF OAK PARK 1910—1914

The First Church invites to its fellowship all who love God and their fellow men, and who strive to know and perform their duty in the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### Declaration of Faith.

The following declaration, while not to be used as a test of fitness for church membership, which is determined by faith in Christ and faithful living, is adopted as a testimony of faith, and an expression of the spirit in which this Church interprets the Word of God. To that Word, interpreted by the Spirit who gave it, final appeal is directed in matters of faith and practice.

#### Article I.—God

We believe that there is one only living and true God, who is revealed to us in Scripture as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

#### Article II.—The Holy Scriptures

We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, written by men who were moved by the Holy Spirit, contain a revelation from God, revealing unto us the things which we most need

and desire to know concerning His character and will, and our obligation to Him; and that they are sufficient for our guidance in all matters of religious faith and practice.

#### Article III.—Our Lord Jesus Christ

We believe that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself; that in the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus, His beloved Son, the love and power of God are made manifest for the salvation of the world.

#### Article IV.—Sin and Salvation

We believe that all men have sinned, and come short of the glory God; that the wages of sin is death, and that the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord; that all who repent and come to God in the love of Jesus Christ, become through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ, and are kept by the power of God through faith unto Salvation.

#### Article V.—The Church of Christ

We believe in the Church of Jesus Christ; in the Gospel ministry; in the Christian Sabbath; and in the ordinances of the Church, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

#### Article VI.—The Work of the Church

We believe that it is the duty of Christians, to confess Christ before men, and united in the fellowship of the Church, to proclaim the Gospel to all men; to support the institutions of charity and compassion; and to labor for the spread of intelligence, liberty, justice, temperance, peace and righteousness in all the earth.

#### Article VII.—The Coming of the Kingdom

We believe in the coming triumph of righteousness in the world which God so loved and for which Christ died; and that they who share the more abundant life and hope which Christ has revealed, triumph over sin and death, and partake of the life everlasting. Amen.

#### THE FOURTH DECLARATION OF FAITH OF THE FIRST CHURCH OF OAK PARK

Adopted in 1914.

The First Church invites to its fellowship all who love God and their fellow men, and who strive to know and perform their duty in the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The following declaration, while not to be used as a test of fitness for church membership, which is determined by faith in

Christ and a consistent life, is adopted as a testimony of faith, and an expression of the spirit in which this Church interprets the Word of God. To that Word, interpreted by the Spirit who gave it, final appeal is directed in matters of faith and practice.

#### THE CONFESSION OF FAITH ADOPTED BY THE NATIONAL COUNCIL IN 1913

We believe in God the Father, infinite in wisdom, goodness, and love; and in Jesus Christ, his Son, our Lord and Saviour, who for us and our salvation lived and died and rose again and liveth evermore; and in the Holy Spirit, who taketh of the things of Christ and revealeth them to us, renewing, comforting, and inspiring the souls of men. We are united in striving to know the will of God as taught in the Holy Scriptures, and in our purpose to walk in the ways of the Lord, made known or to be made known to us. We hold it to be the mission of the Church of Christ to proclaim the Gospel to all mankind, exalting the worship of the one true God, and laboring for the progress of knowledge, the promotion of justice, the reign of peace, and the realization of human brotherhood. Depending, as did our fathers, upon the continued guidance of the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth, we work and pray for the transformation of the world into the Kingdom of God; and we look with faith for the triumph of righteousness and the life everlasting.

#### FORM FOR THE ADMISSION OF MEMBERS

(Candidates for membership make application through the Membership Committee, and their names having been duly propounded, they are approved by vote of the church, usually at the Wednesday evening next preceding a communion service. Having thus been accepted, the candidates receive their public welcome, usually at a communion service and just before the administration of the Lord's Supper.)

##### The Invitation and its Acceptance.

(The names of the candidates being read by the minister with a statement of the vote of the church receiving them into membership, the candidates will come forward and the minister will say:)

Wherewith shall we come before the Lord, and what offering shall we make unto the most high God? He hath showed thee O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

The mercy of the Lord is upon them that fear Him; to those that remember His commandments to do them and keep them. With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Jesus said, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father who is in heaven. Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.

Having, therefore, received such promises, let us come with confidence unto the throne of grace. Let us approach with clean

hands and a pure heart, with faith in God and love for our fellow men. Let us come with penitence and reverence; with humility and boldness, with contrite spirit and gladness of heart. Let us enter into our heritage as disciples of our common Lord, into the fellowship of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, and of the Church of the living God. For behold, He hath set before us an open door, and no man can shut it.

#### The Covenant of the Members.

(Baptism having been administered to those who are not already baptized, and those who were baptized in infancy having ratified the covenant made on their behalf by Christian parents, the minister will address the candidates:)

Dearly beloved:

Confessing your reverent love for God, your heavenly Father, and your faith in Jesus Christ your Saviour, you now enter into the membership of this Church in the service and fellowship of the Spirit of truth. You promise and covenant with God and the Church, to walk together with your Christian brethren in the fellowship of the gospel, and in all the ways of the Lord made known or to be made known to you; to share in the worship and work of this Church, and the faith and devotion of the Church universal. You engage to submit to the government and discipline of this Church until you are regularly dismissed therefrom; to co-operate with it in all good enterprises; and to promote to the utmost of your power its prosperity, its purity and its peace.

Trusting in the grace of God, do you thus covenant and engage?

Answer: I do.

#### The Response of the Church.

(Here the Church will arise and say)

We then affectionately receive you as members with us of the Church of Christ. We bid you welcome, in His name, to all the blessings and privileges which are connected with this divine institution. We tender to you our Christian communion and most cordial fellowship, cherishing a fraternal interest in your spiritual welfare, and desiring to aid you, by our sympathies, our counsels, and our prayers, in discharging the responsibilities which you have this day assumed.

#### The Right Hand of Fellowship.

(Here the Minister will give the right hand of fellowship to each person, with such words as he may think appropriate.)

(By the Pastor)

And now may Almighty God our Heavenly Father help you to fulfill the covenant which you have made with Him and His people this day. The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace. Amen.

## PART THREE

# CREEDS AND CONSCIENCES

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### I. CREEDS: THEIR USE AND ABUSE

The Congregational churches have made united and consistent protest against the tyranny of creeds. Holding as they do to the essential truth which finds expression more or less adequate in all creeds, they have resolutely protested against the right of any man, or group of men, to make a creed which they shall be required to accept. The protest of the Puritans was not against the creed of the Church of England, but against the supposed authority by which creeds were imposed upon the conscience of ministers and church members. Richard Baxter said,

“We do not dissent from the doctrine of the Church of England expressed in the articles and homilies.”

John Robinson and William Brewster in the “Seven Articles” which they submitted in 1617 on behalf of the Pilgrim church said: “To ye confession of faith published in ye name of ye church of England, and to every article thereof, we do with the reformed churches where we live and also elsewhere assent wholly.”

It was altogether common for the early Congregationalists to refer to the Articles of the Church of England as containing their essential views in doctrine; and these references would be more abundant than they are had it not been assumed, and rightly, that their Christian faith was essentially the same as

that of other Christian people in their own day. When, in 1662, two thousand five hundred clergymen passed out of the ministry of the Church of England, it was not wholly nor chiefly because they did not believe the essential doctrine which they were required to preach; indeed, there is good reason to believe that many of those who lost their livings at that time differed from their neighbors chiefly in having a more sensitive conscience in the matter of subscription to creeds and other standards imposed upon them by authority of the crown. The question of doctrine was distinctly a minor one, but in so far as it entered into the controversy which led to the ejection, it was not so much the articles of belief that occasioned the trouble as it was the authority which assumed the right to compel belief.

In a general way this attitude toward creeds has been maintained throughout the history of the Congregational churches. The fact that a Congregationalist refuses to sign a particular creed is not by any means proof, or even presumption, that he does not accept the substance of doctrine contained in the creed. His protest is more likely to be against the assumed right of any man or body of men to compel him to sign any creed. There is a sense in which a Congregationalist will readily subscribe to all creeds and at the same time protest against the authority of them all and singular.

There are those who affirm that any possible creed is an evil, and only evil, and that continually. A writer in *The Unpopular Review* recently expressed himself thus:

It is not only in the fact that the creed of the Church is the wrong one. What is amiss is the mere existence of a creed. As soon as income, position and power are dependent upon assent to no matter what creed, intellectual honesty is imperilled. Men will tell themselves that a formal acceptance of the creed is justified by the good which it will enable them to do. They fail to realize that, in men whose mental life has any vigor, loss of complete intellectual integrity weakens the power of doing good, by producing gradually in all directions an inability to see truth simply. The strictness of party discipline has introduced the same evil into politics; there,

because the evil is comparatively new, it is visible to many who think it unimportant as regards the Church. But the evil is greater as regards the Church, because religion is of more importance than politics, and because it is more necessary that the exponents of religion should be wholly free from taint.

But this is a short-sighted and one-sided statement. We cannot get on without creeds, and there is no good reason why we should attempt it. But there is good reason why we should refuse to be in bondage to our creeds.

Congregationalists have no superstitious reverence for creeds as such, however far some Congregationalists may go from time to time in their regard for particular creeds. Creeds are human instruments, the product of discussion and compromise, and they often suppress as much truth as they express. Very often they have succeeded in emphasizing one truth only by the violent neglect or even denial of other truth equally important. Congregationalists know this, and will not permit themselves to be bound by creeds imposed by the authority of men.

But Congregationalists know, also, that there is a liberty greater than personal liberty, the liberty in which individual men are released from the narrow bondage of self, whether it be self-love or self-expression, into the higher liberty of fellowship. If this is to be done, there must be a union of interests and of utterance. Christians must learn not only to unite in common forms of activity, but must unite in singing the same hymns and in uttering the same great truths. Creeds become valuable as hymns become valuable, because they give voice to this higher liberty.

The very latest book on creeds gives expression in terms of high enthusiasm to this view of the larger liberty which creeds may be made to serve. It is a volume on *The Apostles' Creed*, by Prof. Edward S. Drown, of the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge. Congregationalists may not follow him in the very high regard for creeds which he expresses, yet

they will find themselves in sympathy with his essential thought:

### CREEDS AND LIBERTY

Is a creed a restraint on religious liberty? So it is often maintained. Creeds are regarded as shackles, fetters on freedom. It is held that the road to freedom is through the abolition of creeds.

If creeds are really fetters on freedom, modern men can have no interest in creeds. We demand liberty; liberty of thought and of life, liberty in the state, industrial liberty—above all, liberty of conscience in all things that pertain to our relation with God. The fight for liberty is the fight of the modern world. With a great price purchased we this freedom, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed. If religion is to keep its place in the modern world, it must not merely tolerate the demand for liberty—it must insist upon it. For no freedom is perfectly secured unless it is founded on religious freedom—the freedom of man's relation with God.

If then creeds are a shackle on freedom, creeds cannot permanently be maintained. They must be defended, if at all, in no faint-hearted, apologetic way. It will not be enough to prove that their restraints on freedom are not very serious. The issue must be more boldly faced. Creeds must be shown to be guarantees of liberty. It must be shown that their abolition would conduce to bondage rather than to freedom. Only such a contention can vindicate the rightful place for creeds. A half-hearted defence must be abandoned for a bold attack.

The fact is that freedom cannot be separated from a right relation to one's environment. Freedom and experience go hand in hand. On the one hand, man is not a thing. He is not the mere sport of outward circumstance. He can become the master and not the slave of his own nature and of his environment. On the other hand, he can attain such free mastery only as he grasps the truth of his own nature and of the environment in which he is placed. Freedom is a growth, and it grows only through knowledge of the truth and obedience to that truth. If a man's will acts arbitrarily, without relation to his own nature, and to his circumstances, then his will enslaves him instead of freeing him. A man lost in the woods can go any way that he likes. But by that very fact he cannot escape from them. He finds a path, and in following it he wins his freedom. A ship at sea without chart or compass is the sport of accident. Chart and compass reveal its true position and open up freedom to reach the desired haven. Free control over nature comes only through knowledge of and obedience to the laws of nature. As scientific knowledge of nature increases, scientific control over nature grows by leaps and bounds, and man's free control of nature grows apace. Freedom consists always in a relation to the truth. Only by knowledge of truth can man's will be set free from bondage to his environment. By obedience to law he becomes master instead of slave.

All this is just as true of political freedom. Political freedom does not come at the beginning of history. It is an end to be achieved, and to be achieved only as right relations are developed between man and man. The free savage is a figment of the imagination. He is bound by traditions, customs, the hard necessities of life. Thomas Hobbes was perfectly right in maintaining that a state without law was a state where every man was deprived of his rights. Anarchy is but another name for tyranny. The individual citizen becomes free as the community establishes itself in law and order. Laws that truly express the constitution of society at the same time secure the freedom of the citizen. Laws guard and protect that freedom. Covenants are signed that it may be defended. Magna Charta guarded the rights of men. When the men on the Mayflower put their names to that compact, did they sign away their freedom or secure it? When the Declaration of Independence was signed was that signature an act of slavery? When the Constitution of the United States brought order out of confusion and light out of darkness did it impose slavery or liberty upon the nation?

Freedom of the will goes hand in hand with the discovery of truth. Freedom in the State goes hand in hand with the growth of law.

Of course the law must be true law; that is, it must be law that rightly expresses the nature of the community and the relation to each other of its citizens. When law distorts those relations, then law becomes tyranny. But the escape from tyranny is not through the abolition of law, but through its reformation. Anarchy is the opposite of freedom. Freedom exists in proportion as the community has come to a true realization of itself, and has expressed itself in true laws. Freedom consists in right relation to law.

In every case freedom comes only through the truth. Whether we are speaking of freedom of the will, of political freedom, or of industrial freedom, in any case we are free only by being put into true relations with our fellowmen.

Such considerations should cast light on the character of religious freedom and on its relation to creeds. Religious freedom consists in a man's ability to express himself truly in his relation to God and to his fellows. Alike to God and to his fellows. For religion is never a matter of relation to God alone. It is also a matter of human fellowship brought about by that relation, real or supposed, to God. From its beginnings religion has been a social rather than a purely individual matter. Religion began not with the individual, but with the tribe or clan or family. And as religion developed it has always been a means through which men were knit together by a common belief in their common relation to God.

This union of the individual and the social runs through the whole New Testament from cover to cover. The Apostle Paul opens up the richness of the individual life, created through its surrender to God.

Later Christianity has had many faults and aberrations, but it has never utterly lost that ideal. It lies at the very heart of the

belief in the Church. For the Church, rightly taken, stands for the ideal of a fellowship among men that is rooted and grounded on fellowship with God. In the deepest sense all Christian life is life in the Church, that is in fellowship. Take the word Church in no narrow or sectarian interpretation, and the old saying, so often misused, becomes true in the deepest sense, "There is no salvation outside of the Church." For the heart of that saying is that there can be no fellowship with God unless it is realized through fellowship with men, that the love of God means love of the brethren.

This brings us back to the statement that religious freedom consists in a man's ability to express himself truly in his relation to God and to his fellows. What bearing on such liberty has a creed?

There are certain religions in which a positive definite creed emerges, and in which acceptance of that creed is regarded as vital to the fellowship of that religion. The religion of Israel had such a creed. It finds definite expression as follows: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thy house, and upon thy gates." (Deut. 6: 4-9.) The acceptance of the Lord as God becomes a creed, a badge of fellowship.

Mohammedanism has its creed. "There is no God except Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet." Under that creed the body of the faithful form a fellowship. Something of the same kind can be said of the ancient Persian religion of Zarathustra or Zoroaster. Allegiance to the God of light against the power of darkness became a badge of fellowship. In all these cases we have not merely an underlying theology, but we have certain fundamental ideas expressing allegiance to a common God. And that allegiance and the beliefs that went with it become a pledge of a common fellowship.

All these religions are distinctly fighting religions. Each one is concerned with its own truth as vital. Each is in a sense an intolerant religion, that is it regards its own truth as a thing to be fought for. There is a great difference between such religions and the easy going tolerance of Greece and Rome, a tolerance that rested not upon a conviction of the rights of conscience, the only true basis for toleration, but upon an indifference to truth, or at least upon the suspicion that all ideas are in some way equally true. But these fighting religions have had aggressive power, they have had a distinctly missionary element. For, realizing that religion implies truth, they could not be indifferent to truth and to its propagation.

Now the Christian religion had a creed from very early times. Not, of course, a formal creed. That came later. But in the New Testament it is perfectly clear that the early Christians were knit together in a common allegiance to their Lord, and that that alle-

giance was expressed in an elementary creedal form. The heart of this was the confession of Jesus as Lord and Christ. Perhaps its earliest form was that Jesus was the Christ, or more strictly that the Christ was Jesus. There is given no single form of words, but the importance of such a fundamental confession of faith in Christ is clearly seen. The following passages will serve as examples: "Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 10: 32, cf. Luke 12: 8.) "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. 10: 9-10.) "That every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. 2: 11.) "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him and he in God." (I John 4: 15. Cf. I John 4: 2-3, and II John, verse 7.) And the following passage is very probably a quotation from an early hymn or confession of faith: "He who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory." (I Tim. 3: 16.) These passages sufficiently indicate the fundamental confession of Christ which lay at the basis of the Christian fellowship.

A creed then is primarily an expression of religious allegiance and a badge of religious fellowship. It is not first a mere theology, a mere collection of dogmas or beliefs. It is primarily an expression of faith or belief, belief taken in a personal rather than in an intellectual sense, belief conceived of as trust or allegiance. It carries with it, of course, intellectual contents. But those intellectual contents are but the expression of a fundamental act of trust.

Now is such a creed enslaving? Yes, if the path through the woods is enslaving to the man who is lost. Yes, if the map and compass are enslaving to the ship at sea. Yes, if the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States are shackles on liberty. But if path and compass and map and constitution are means to secure liberty, and to escape from slavery, then may not a creed expressing a common allegiance serve the same purpose? If religious fellowship rests upon such common allegiance and upon the truth that that allegiance implies, then a creed expressing that allegiance and that truth is not a badge of slavery but of freedom.

It is an easy supposition that the abolition of all creeds would make for religious, for Christian, freedom. The question as to how the abolition of the Apostles' Creed would affect freedom can be discussed only after we have considered the character of that creed. Here the question concerns creeds in general. And there is no more reason to suppose that the abolition of all creeds would make for liberty in the Church any more than the abolition of constitutions and laws would make for liberty in the State. If men were only isolated individuals they would need no constitutions, no laws, and

no creeds. But if men find their true life not in isolation but in fellowship, and if that fellowship rests on the discovery of true relations between men, then laws and constitutions are but the road to freedom. And if religious freedom goes hand in hand with religious fellowship, then the creed that maintains that fellowship is but an expression of the truth that makes men free.

Of course a creed may be misused. It may be interpreted in a narrow and coercive way. So may laws and constitutions be misused. Or a creed may be a false creed, expressing untrue relations and narrowing fellowship. So may constitutions and laws be falsely formed and thus may produce slavery. There is the danger of tyranny, whether in State or Church. And always men are to be found who hold that tyranny can be destroyed only by anarchy, that liberty can be maintained only by the abolition of law. But that way madness lies. The cure for misuse of law is right use of law. The cure for bad law is good law. When laws rightly express the life of a people and are administered to protect that life, then they are the guarantees of freedom. So must it be with Christian liberty. If a creed is a false creed or is falsely used, then it will produce slavery. But the cure for that slavery will be a true creed and a true conception of its use.

Confessions of faith have their value. The work that is to save the world must be a federated work; there must be discipline, organization, unity of thought, life and action. The church must learn not only to sing the same hymns, but to think the same great thoughts and to utter the same great convictions. Creeds are a normal expression of corporate life.

A common faith calls for a common expression. Novalis said, "My belief gains quite infinitely the moment I can convince another mind of it." The promise of God is to those who agree on earth as touching any one thing. With the mouth confession is made unto salvation and that confession is more than the confession of an individual soul and that salvation is social as well as personal. The truths of the Christian religion clamor for utterance. If Christians should hold their peace the very stones would cry out. Principal Rainy in his chapter on "Creeds and Confessions" in his Cunningham Lecture, says: "A high Christian enthusiasm has usually been connected with strong and decided affirmation of doctrine, and with a disposition to speak it out ever more fully. That temper has been venturesome to speak even as it has been

venturesome to do; as little fearing to declare God's Word in human speech, as to embody His will in human acts."

But if Christians are to utter their faith unitedly they must find common terms in which that faith can be expressed: for expressed it must be if it is to live. Prof. W. A. Curtis says: "If we know in whom we have believed, and in what we have believed, it is a Christian's duty to proclaim it, should be a Christian's pride, and will prove a marvellous reinforcement of a Christian's power. Faith that is genuine will out. Faith that is uttered will grow in the believer and will lay hold upon others. It is a law of spiritual nature. The men who toiled to compose Confessions knew it well and counted upon it. Above all the various particular objects that they had in view, the vindication of their teaching against misrepresentation and attack, the settlement of controversy, the ratification of ecclesiastical union or reunion, the determination of orthodoxy, and the provision of a dogmatic standard of discipline, they felt that it was the burden and glory of faith to find articulate expression, and that the communion of believers needed reliable guidance in believing."

Congregational scholars who have been stoutest in their protest against the use of creeds as a test have been strongest in their belief in the practical value of creeds as a testimony. Dr. Quint, who constantly quoted with the heartiest approval Cotton Mather's "golden phrase" "Let the terms of communion run parallel with the terms of salvation," held also to the value of creeds as an expression of the common life of Christians. In his article in the *Congregational Quarterly* in 1869 in which more fully than anywhere else he set forth his views on this subject he said,—

We say, then, in the golden phrase of Cotton Mather, let 'the terms of communion run parallel with the terms of salvation.' Reform whatever is contrary to this rule as unscriptural, and also, as history shows, an innovation upon the primitive and catholic way.

Articles of doctrinal belief—a creed—are essential to the historic church, and to every organization that is truly a part thereof.

For the Creed, the compend of the doctrines that have from time to time been wrought out of Scripture through the experiences of study and conflict, is an important part of the history of the church. The fruits of the Christian experience are precious. A "church" that discards them is an alien body, without interest or right in "the holy church universal throughout all the world." A lack of the historic spirit, which feeds on the fruits of the past, impoverishes the poet, the philosopher, the statesman, and no less the Christian and the church. The creed of the historic church will be a catholic creed,—not emphasizing the shibboleths of sect or school. As the historic testimony of the church to the true meaning of the Word of God, it will be borne in public,—and read upon solemn sacramental days. Why not, when no Fourth of July celebration is complete without a public reading of the Declaration of Independence? 'Ye shall know the truth,' said Christ, "and the truth shall make you free." It should be owned and consented to by every one who is "set for the defence of the Gospel," ministers and office-bearers in the church; and for this use, the fuller the better; the freer from the double entendres of biblical phraseology, the better also. For the biblical phraseology is the very thing which the creed undertakes to interpret.

Doctrinal articles being the products of the spiritual life, the developments of Christian experience from the Word of God, we have in the creed thus formed the Word of God tested by history,—a test as much more conclusive than that of any individual mind as the sum of the Christian centuries is longer than a single life. And so we may say, slightly altering Shiller's famous phrase, the history of doctrine is the judgment of doctrine. In the evangelical creed, then, concerning man's sinfulness and moral impotence, Christ's atoning sacrifice, the Holy Ghost's regenerating work, the everlasting state of rewards and punishments, the deity of the Redeemer, and the tripersonality of God, we hear, not the scattered voices of individuals, but the authoritative testimony of History herself, reaffirming the declaration of the apostle, "These things are good and profitable unto men." This is nothing less than the testimony of time to the truth of eternity.

A written creed, while tending often to controversy, when appealed to as an unvarying standard, has a certain practical advantage in taking a controverted subject out of the realm of necessary and constant definition. It has often been noted that denominations with no written creed are under special necessity of constantly defining their unwritten creed. If a written creed is not made an object of worship, is not upheld as something worthy of perpetual veneration, the writing of it may sometimes serve as a guarantee that certain doctrines contained in it do not require constant iteration. The writing

of them permits of their being pigeonholed; they may be "folioed and forgot," yet if any one wants to know what was the last high-water mark of doctrine on that particular denominational shore, it is safely registered in a well authenticated creed, which may be produced on occasion and put away until needed again. Mark Twain wrote a story when the bell-punch first came to be used upon the street cars. The conductor was required to "punch in the presence of the passenger." That phrase, with its lilt and alliteration, could but be provocative of an effort to make a jingle; and Mr. Clemens told how he made a couplet, which rang through his mind day and night, until it nearly drove him mad, but which he was able finally to forget when he had taught it to some one else. There is a bit of genuine psychology in the story. A creed becomes both more and less harmful when it is written, and one good thing about the writing of it is that the writing may become a wholesome means to its removal from the sphere of active discussion, necessitated by unwritten creeds.

As this book was moving toward the press, the second inaugural of Wilson and Marshall occurred. Vice-President Marshall's inaugural address attracted some comment because it was confessedly a creed. He said,

"May I make bold to insert in the record some elements of the creed which I have adopted in this period?" and then proceeded to deliver his brief address in credal form. The creed, which occupied the whole of his brief address, consisted of these four articles, which the Vice-President amplified only a little, and which we may here condense :

#### VICE-PRESIDENT MARSHALL'S CREED

The creed which I have adopted in this period does not embrace what I know, but holds part of what I believe.

I have faith that this government of ours was divinely ordained to disclose whether men are by nature fitted or can by education be made fit for self government.

I believe that the world, now advancing and now retreating, is nevertheless moving forward to a far off divine event wherein the

tongues of Babel will again be blended in the language of a common brotherhood. . . . I believe there is no finer form of government than the one under which we live and that I ought to be willing to live or to die, as God decrees, that it may not perish from off the earth.

I believe that though my first right is to be a partisan, that my first duty, when the only principles on which free government can rest are being strained, is to be a patriot and to follow in a wilderness of words that clear call which bids me guard and defend the ark of our national covenant.

This utterance was unique as to form only, and not as to fact. President Wilson's address was just as certainly a creed, uttered as his own creed and the nation's. With no violence to its spirit it could easily be recast as to the introductory words of its successive clauses, so as to read:

#### PRESIDENT WILSON'S CREED

These, therefore, are the things we shall stand for, whether in war or in peace;

We believe that all nations are equally interested in the peace of the world and in the political stability of free peoples, and equally responsible for their maintainance;

We believe that the essential principle of peace is the actual equality of nations in all matters of right or privilege;

We believe that peace cannot securely or justly rest upon an armed balance of power;

We believe that governments derive all their just powers from the consent of the governed and that no other powers should be supported by the common thought, purpose or power of the family of nations.

We believe that the seas should be equally free and safe for the use of all peoples, under rules set up by common agreement and consent, and that, so far as practicable, they should be accessible to all upon equal terms.

That we believe national armaments should be limited to the necessities of national order and domestic safety.

We believe that the community of interest and of power upon which peace must henceforth depend imposes upon each nation the duty of seeing to it that all influences proceeding from its own citizens meant to encourage or assist revolution in other states should be sternly and effectually suppressed and prevented.

I need not argue these principles to you, my fellow countrymen; they are your own, part and parcel of your own thinking and your own motive in affairs. They spring up native among us. Upon this platform of purpose and of action we can stand together.

Every president's inaugural address of any note has been a creed. The significant utterances are all in terms not of knowledge but of faith and conviction. It is not the facts of demonstrable knowledge that move men, but their beliefs. No man is known to have laid down his life in support of his positive knowledge that the multiplication table is true, nor shed his heart's blood to convince the world of the truth of the binomial theorem, nor gone singing to the stake to demonstrate the *pons asinorum*. "We believe, and therefore speak." The words of Vice-President Marshall in introducing his creed are pertinent:

"The creed which I have adopted in this period . . . does not embrace what I know, but holds part of what I believe."

It is said that a Congregational minister was once preaching in an Episcopal school, and that they brought him a surplice. He asked,

"Am I required to wear this? Because, if I am not required to wear it, I will; but if I am required to wear it, I will not."

That is an entirely consistent attitude for a Congregationalist concerning many things about which Congregationalists have appeared to be obstinate. They will go almost any length to walk in fellowship with other Christians until the element of assumed authority intrudes; there they halt. Surplice, ritual and creed are to Congregationalists mere instruments of possible effective co-operation. When so employed, they are not objected to, and may be gladly adopted. But when they become matters in which one Christian, calling himself bishop or pope, or one group of Christians, calling itself by whatever name, seeks to impose a form of words upon another Christian or group of Christians, then Congregationalists stop, and if necessary, fight.

There is occasion now and then for Congregationalists to dissent from the well meant endeavor of some honored member

of their own communion, who, impressed by what seems to him the importance of a particular doctrine, may demand that some ecclesiastical body, or the whole denomination, go on record concerning it in a manner that virtually makes it a creedal test. In such a case the question is not whether the members affected believe or do not believe the particular doctrine affirmed and sought to be imposed; the question is of the right of any Congregationalist or other person to place the denomination, or any part thereof, on record in terms of his own choosing.

This is one reason why, at a service or ordination or installation, the candidate is always permitted first to state his belief in his own terms; no other Congregationalist has the right to choose for him the form of words in which he shall be compelled to express his faith. It is a reason why in the early churches individual Christians applying for membership often presented written statements of their own setting forth in their own language the faith which they professed.

Channing spoke not primarily for Unitarianism but for historic Congregationalism in his noble utterance against bondage to creeds.

When I bring them into contrast with the New Testament, into what insignificance do they sink! What are they? Skeletons, freezing abstractions, metaphysical expressions of unintelligible dogmas; and these I am to regard as the expositions of the fresh, living, infinite truth which came from Jesus! I might with equal propriety be required to hear and receive the lisplings of infancy as the expressions of wisdom. Creeds are to the Scriptures what rushlights are to the sun. The creed-maker defines Jesus in half a dozen lines, perhaps in metaphysical terms, and calls me to assent to this account of my Saviour. I learn less of Christ, by this process, than I should learn of the sun, by being told that this glorious luminary is a circle about a foot in diameter. There is but one way of knowing Christ. We must place ourselves near him, see him, hear him, follow him from his cross to the heavens, sympathize with him and obey him, and thus catch clear and bright glimpses of his divine glory.

Christian truth is infinite. Who can think of shutting it up in a few lines of an abstract creed? You might as well compress the boundless atmosphere, the fire, the all-pervading light, the free

winds of the universe, into separate parcels, and weigh and label them, as break up Christianity into a few propositions. Christianity is freer, more illimitable, than the light or the winds. It is too mighty to be bound down by man's puny hands. It is a spirit, rather than a rigid doctrine,—the spirit of boundless love. The infinite cannot be defined and measured out like a human manufacture. It cannot be reduced to a system. It cannot be comprehended in a set of precise ideas. It is to be felt rather than described. The spiritual impressions which a true Christian receives from the character and teachings of Christ, and in which the chief efficacy of the religion lies, can be poorly brought out in words. Words are but brief, rude hints of a Christian's mind. Its thoughts and feelings overflow them. To those who feel as he does, he can make himself known; for such can understand the tones of the heart; but he can no more lay down his religion in a series of abstract propositions, than he can make known by a few vague terms the expressive features and inmost soul of a much-loved friend. It has been the fault of all sects, that they have been too anxious to define their religion. They have labored to circumscribe the infinite. Christianity, as it exists in the mind of the true disciple, is not made up of fragments, of separate ideas, which he can express in detached propositions. It is a vast and ever-unfolding whole, pervaded by one spirit, each precept and doctrine deriving its vitality from its union with all. When I see this generous, heavenly doctrine compressed and cramped in human creeds, I feel as I should were I to see screws and chains applied to the countenance and limbs of a noble fellow-creature, deforming and destroying one of the most beautiful works of God.

From the infinity of Christian truth, of which I have spoken, it follows that our views of it must always be very imperfect, and ought to be continually enlarged. The wisest theologians are children who have caught but faint glimpses of the religion; who have taken but their first lessons; and whose business it is "to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ." Need I say how hostile to this growth is a fixed creed, beyond which we must never wander? Such a religion as Christ's demands the highest possible activity and freedom of the soul. Every new gleam of light should be welcomed with joy. Every hint should be followed out with eagerness. Every whisper of the divine voice in the soul should be heard. The love of Christian truth should be so intense, as to make us willing to part with all other things for a better comprehension of it. Who does not see that human creeds, setting bounds to thought, and telling us where all inquiry must stop, tend to repress this holy zeal, to shut our eyes on new illumination, to hem us within the beaten paths of man's construction, to arrest that perpetual progress which is the life and glory of an immortal mind?

It is another and great objection to creeds, that, wherever they acquire authority, they interfere with that simplicity and godly sincerity on which the efficacy of religious teaching very much depends. That a minister should speak with power, it is important that he should speak from his own soul, and not studiously con-

form himself to modes of speaking which others have adopted. It is important that he should give out the truth in the very form in which it presents itself to his mind, in the very words which offer themselves spontaneously as the clothing of his thoughts. To express our own minds frankly, directly, fearlessly, is the way to reach other minds. Now it is the effect of creeds to check this free utterance of thought. The minister must seek words which will not clash with the consecrated articles of his church. If new ideas spring up in his mind, not altogether consonant with what the creedmonger has established, he must cover them with misty language. It he happen to doubt the standard of his church, he must strain its phraseology, must force it beyond its obvious import, that he may give his assent to it without departures from truth. All these processes must have a blighting effect on the mind and heart. They impair self-respect. They cloud the intellectual eye. They accustom men to tamper with truth. In proportion as a man dilutes his thought, and suppresses his conviction, to save his orthodoxy from suspicion; in proportion as he borrows his words from others, instead of speaking in his own tongue; in proportion as he distorts language from its common use, that he may stand well with his party; in that proportion he clouds and degrades his intellect, as well as undermines the manliness and integrity of his character. How deeply do I commiserate the minister, who, in the warmth and freshness of youth, is visited with glimpses of higher truth than is embodied in the creed, but who dares not be just to himself, and is made to echo what is not the simple, natural expression of his own mind! Better were it for us to beg our bread and clothe ourselves in rags, than to part with Christian simplicity and frankness. Better for a minister to preach in barns or the open air, where he may speak the truth from the fulness of his soul, than to lift up in cathedrals, amidst pomp and wealth, a voice which is not true to his inward thoughts. If they who wear the chains of creeds once knew the happiness of breathing the air of freedom, and of moving with an unencumbered spirit, no wealth or power in the world's gift would bribe them to part with their spiritual liberty.

Great violence has been done to the teaching of the New Testament in the effort to make it appear that subjects of baptism were first required to assent to a creed. Particularly has this error attached itself to the two incidents of the baptism of the Philippian jailor and of the Ethiopian eunuch. In the case of the former it is important to remember that Paul's word, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved;" cannot by any possibility have suggested to the jailor the idea of a credal test. It must have meant to him the simplest possible committal of his life in trust to the

Master who had given such power and courage as the jailor beheld in Paul and Silas. The jailor knew practically nothing about Jesus except what he saw reflected in the fortitude of these brave disciples. Nothing would have been farther from the sphere of possibility than that he should have formulated a creed, or been able intelligently to have assented to one. Neither there nor anywhere else in the New Testament was belief identical with an intellectual affirmation. Believing in Christ is not the same as conjecturing something about Christ. Saving faith is quite another thing than the formulation of a correct opinion.

In the case of the Ethiopian eunuch we meet with a clear interpolation. The Revised Versions unhesitatingly omit the verse (Acts 8: 37) in which Philip is made to impose a creed upon his convert. The eunuch saw water and said, "Behold, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" And the account goes straight on to tell that he commanded the chariot to stand still, and that they both descended, and Philip baptized him. A good while afterward, when it had become customary for catecumens to make a confession of their faith preliminary to baptism, some good man reading the account thought Philip had been negligent, and invented the little dialogue in which Philip said, "If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest." And according to this interesting fiction the eunuch answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God."

Very likely the eunuch did so believe, to the extent that such a belief was possible at the end of one brief lesson, given under the conditions described; and that belief was a factor by no means negligible in the decision of the eunuch to ask for baptism, and in the readiness of Philip to administer it. But it was the afterthought of a creed-making generation that caused Philip to thrust between him and his baptism the formality of assent to a creed.

It needs to be said a thousand times that faith in Christ is a very different thing from opinion or conjecture concerning Christ. Men have sought repeatedly and with great damage to Christianity to identify faith with intellectual opinion. Such an effort involves a hopeless confusion of mind as to the essential content of faith.

Many good people have assumed that their faith in the divinity of Jesus Christ was in some way bound up with their ability to declare their unflinching confidence in the doctrine of the Virgin Birth. It is impossible to find in the teaching of Jesus any word from which one might infer that He had any particular interest in such a doctrine, or that He would ever have consented that faith in Him should be dependent upon its acceptance.

During the period of Abraham Lincoln's candidacy for the presidency reports were circulated in every part of the nation that he was an illegitimate child. If Herndon, Lincoln's law partner, is to be believed, Lincoln himself thought this to be true and was profoundly saddened by it. Not till many years afterward was the record of his parents' legal marriage established, more than a year before his birth, and recorded in another county than that in which Lincoln appears to have believed it should have been recorded. Did the man who in 1860 or 1864 voted for Lincoln, saying as he did so, "I believe in Abraham Lincoln," mean by that he had confidence that there somewhere existed a certificate of marriage of Abraham Lincoln's parents? Was every man a traitor who had an honest doubt upon this question? If so, Herndon was a traitor, and probably Lincoln also. As a matter of fact a voter might easily have said, "I hope those reports are false, but I have no means of proving that to be the case; and whether they are false or true I believe in Abraham Lincoln." In like manner a Christian may say, "I should be very sorry to lose out of the Christmas story the beautiful narrative in the beginning of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke; but if I

should ever become convinced that these were the reverent efforts of a later age to account for the unique personality of Jesus, and that He was in fact the legitimate son of Joseph and Mary, born in lawful wedlock, upon whom came the Holy Ghost in such measure that God became manifest in His flesh, I should still believe in Him as the Son of God, my Lord and Saviour."

Such a man's faith in Jesus Christ would rest upon his belief in what Jesus was and is, and not on any speculative opinion as to how He becomes so.

There is an important distinction between the confession of faith in a creed, and in adherence to the system of faith which the creed embodies. The man who drinks from a spring may express his gratitude for the water with little thought of the vessel in which the water is conveyed to his lips. Our fathers expressed their faith through certain creeds, but their faith was not identical with the creeds. It was always a greater thing than the creeds could by any possibility confine. No one lake reflects the whole heaven; no one cup contains the ocean out of which it dips water. Our fathers drank of the Rock that followed them, and we drink of the same flowing stream. Their creed was their cup, and because it conveyed the water of their spiritual life we honor it. But we confess our loyalty to the same faith, perhaps in quite other forms. Certainly our faith must be confessed in the language of our own generation.

## II. THE ETHICS OF CREED SUBSCRIPTION

Few subjects have given rise to more distress among ministers than those arising out of questions of conscience touching the authority of creeds. To what extent is a minister bound by the creed he is supposed to have accepted? It might be supposed that in the Roman Catholic Church a priest would be able to say that the church has assumed the responsibility of determining what he shall teach, and that between his personal, opinions as a man and his official utterances as a priest, there is a great gulf fixed. Many priests do assume just this and their consciences may be supposed to be more or less clear, but we have abundant witness that in all ages the more conscientious and consistent even of Roman Catholic priests have not been wholly satisfied with this view of the case. Thousands of distinguished priests have been lost to that and to the Episcopal Church because they could no longer subscribe to creeds which they did not believe. Still more keen has been the anguish of ministers whose churches hold no such theory of responsibility assumed by ecclesiastical authority. Some ministers have felt constrained to retire from the ministry almost at the first divergence of their own views from those of the creeds by which they supposed themselves to have been bound. Others have gone hastily into their pulpits, denouncing all creeds, particularly the creeds to which they have themselves subscribed, and this usually with little comfort to their own consciences, or to the peace of mind of their congregations.

High ecclesiastics have been prone to the same narrow view as the business man. Lord Morley's strong essay on "Compromise" in his lectures on "The Ethics of Religious Conformity and Clerical Veracity" is able but one-sided. His

fundamental declaration, "It makes all the difference in the world whether we put Truth in the first place, or in the second place," has settled the question for a great many people who wanted a short-cut to a solution of a difficult problem. For, in a different spirit than that of Pilate, we must ask, What is Truth? The particular truth on which Lord Morley based his declaration was the indubitable fact that a particular minister had assented to a particular creed and therefore in the interests of truth must hold and teach it. Is this all there is of the matter? Has the minister assented to that creed as a complete, final and unalterable compendium of truth? Not in Congregationalism certainly, and how is larger truth ever to be discovered if no man is at liberty to discover anything not already embodied in a creed? Something more than abstract truth must be invoked in judging men. If one is to put truth in the first place he must place side by side with his creed subscription his higher loyalty to the spirit of Christ, which is to lead men into all truth.

The case against ministers who continue to recite creeds whose words no longer adequately express their own views, was ably set forth a score of years ago by Henry Sedgwick in his "Practical Ethics," containing his two essays on "The Ethics of Religious Conformity," and "Clerical Veracity." Sedgwick, who had studied for the Anglican ministry, gave up his fellowship and his plan to enter the priesthood when he found that he could not subscribe to the creeds of the Episcopal Church. Choosing as his profession teaching instead of preaching, he maintained a strong interest in the profession which he had abandoned. He held that "Hypocrisy and insincere conformity have always been a besetting vice of established or predominant religion." He had no sympathy with men who occupy positions in a church whose fundamental tenets they have discarded. He scorned men who seem to believe "that any clergyman may lie without scruple in the cause of religious progress, with a view to aiding popular

education in the new theology, and still feel that he is as veracious as his profession allows him to be."

Sedgwick, therefore, is held in high regard by all ecclesiasts who hold the letter of the law above the spirit. He has been heartily commended of late by the Bishop of Oxford, and has received favorable mention by Archibald Wier in an article with the caustic title "Criminous Clerks" in the *Hibbert Journal* (July 1914). That article proposed to raise an endowment fund "for facilitating the resignation of doubting clergymen," and spoke of the possible benefit to secular life of having men who now are held in bondage to creeds they do not believe, but who might be very useful in other vocations.

But that article has been answered by several men of high standing who set forth with considerable cogency that the matter is not ethically so simple as these essays assume.

The Athenasian Creed is still required to be uttered by priests in the Anglican Church. The ecclesiastics who steadfastly resist every attempt to make its reading optional are also busy inventing verbal subtleties by means of which men may continue to recite it without supposing themselves to be required to believe it. What does that creed affirm or assume to be the essential thing of Christianity?

The Athenasian Creed begins with this affirmation. "Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith; which faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall everlastingly perish." Then it goes on through forty-four articles to make affirmations which it is completely impossible for any intelligent mind to hold consistently,—affirmations that are thoroughly self-contradictory and which abound in metaphysical subtleties. Virtually, there is nothing of the spirit of the Gospel of Jesus in this creed from beginning to end. Yet it ends as it begins with a declaration of the reality of everlasting fire, into which each man is to be cast who does not believe this creed in its entirety.

Now there is not a man in the Church of England or out of it who can whole-heartedly and unreservedly say he believes that creed and that the man who does not believe it to its last speculation is a proper subject for eternal damnation. The mind utterly revolts at the inherent atrocity of any such conception. Yet there is the creed, which by good fortune the Episcopal Church in America got rid of when it effected an organization separate from the Church of England, but at that same time the American Episcopal Church endeavored to free itself from the incubus of the Nicene Creed and came very near to accomplishing this desire. The Church of England refused its consent to so wholesale a demolition of creeds. It was quite willing that the American Episcopalians should discard the Athenasian Creed, and perhaps would have been glad itself to be rid of it if it could have done so and saved its face, but it feared lest the American Episcopalians should carry the process too far. Therefore, in the final adjustment the Nicene Creed was saddled upon the American Episcopal Church against its desire. Did that fact make American Episcopalians any more orthodox, either now or then? Was the American Episcopal Church any less orthodox than it had been before, or became afterward during the few months when it did not consider itself as bound by the Nicene Creed? As a matter of fact, is that creed any more than the Athenasian Creed a certificate of orthodoxy?

But who that reads the Athenasian Creed, declaring that "Before all things it is necessary" to believe a lot of absurdities or go to hell, can comprehend how the people who framed that intolerable fetter of the human spirit were endeavoring to set forth the essential truth which Jesus uttered in the Sermon on the Mount, or in Paul's triumphant declaration of the freedom of the soul in the Gospel of the Son of God?

On creed-subscription as affording a supposed basis for orthodoxy in the pulpit or in the professor's chair, a wise

word has been uttered by Prof. Clarence A. Beckwith, of Chicago Theological Seminary:

Creed-subscription is the relic of an antiquated ecclesiastical or political condition in which the ruling power claimed absolute authority over the beliefs and actions of men. The motive was to guard against any deviation from the given standard which would issue in teaching or practice out of accord with the centralized decision or dogma which had been ordained.

In its ecclesiastical bearings it appears to me that creed-subscription rests upon several untenable assumptions:

(1) That a particular organization imposing this requirement, possesses the "final faith," and that the tenets to which subscription is demanded are stated in such terms as admit of but one interpretation.

(2) That the creed proposed contains the complete and therefore the only teaching of the Scriptures on the matters in question.

(3) That it would be possible for two men to assign an identical meaning to any and all propositions which belong to the field of theological doctrine.

(4) That a body of men, all of whom are fallible, who formulate a creed which is in every instance a compromise and therefore does not express the exact belief of any individual, have a right to require of a fellow-man, equally gifted with them in mental and spiritual furnishing, that he yield to their dogmas an unquestioning and unqualified assent.

(5) That every teacher has not the same right of freedom of inquiry and opinion which was claimed by those who propounded the creed in question, and that in the use of the same freedom he may not react to his environment as fully as they supposed they reacted to theirs.

(6) That one's attitude toward reality is static rather than dynamic, and that therefore truth may be "fixed in an eternal state" rather than subject to development of the human consciousness, deriving its authority not from without but from its progressive authentication within the unfolding processes of experience.

As far as I can see none of these assumptions is valid, except within the Roman Catholic church, and even there the assumptions are not universally recognized. As Protestants we are committed to the alone sufficiency of the Scriptures and the indefeasible right of private judgment; as Congregationalists we follow John Robinson in his conviction that God has yet more truth to break forth from his Word; as Christians we can allow no one to wrest from us the prerogative which we have received from Jesus Christ, of being guided into all the truth. And unless we are prepared to offer unpardonable affront to the very principle of our intelligence, we cannot admit that the divine promise is yet fully realized—not at the Council of Nicaea, not at Trent, not in the XXXIX Articles, not in the Westminster Confession.

Creed-subscription, if it is at all rigid and is enforced, is on the whole detrimental to the very institutions which adhere to it. In

the first place, it advertizes the institution as an anachronism, ostensibly living in the present but anchored to an outworn past, afraid to cut loose and set sail with its precious heritage of faith into a yet more radiant and rationally satisfying future. Again, the institution which smothers free inquiry and holds ever so silent a threat over the head of its instructors, is inviting to itself the ugly suspicion of contemporary scholars that intellectual results acquired by such repressive measures are untrustworthy and the teachers themselves insincere. Finally, among the students of such institutions two diametrically opposite results appear: One group, the openminded, the noblest, and most promising men, violently react against the teaching, especially when they become aware of its dogmatic and unsubstantial basis, and become thenceforth insusceptible to such guiding influences as they need now more than they will ever need them again. The other group, timid, lacking self-reliance, leaning on external authority, tend to become unthinking in judgment, narrowly partisan, and if perchance they are strong men, advocates of solidarity of organization, of strict dogma in the pulpit and the seminary chair, finding a vent for pent up powers in social activities where no dogmatic barriers hinder, themselves perhaps most venturesome in this field, but all the time inhospitable to advances in theological thought. A seminary may muzzle or bind its instructors, but fortunately it cannot compel the respect of students or of other institutions either for itself or for its teaching force.

In my judgment the only safe course for an institution of learning is, first to find the man it wants, and then to encourage him in an untrameled freedom both of scholarly inquiry and of formal instruction.

Although Congregationalism has always stood opposed to the principle of compulsory creed subscription, our denomination has sometimes fallen a victim to its own logic in its demand upon the consciences of those within its communion upon whom creeds have been imposed. Examples have not been lacking of a tyranny within the Congregational communion regarding matters of creed subscription which would hardly be tolerated in denominations whose regard for creeds is much higher than our own. There has been a disposition in our denomination to say that "a man ought not to be compelled to assent to a creed, but if he does assent he must believe it to the last line, and if he is a minister he must preach it. If the time comes when he cannot conscientiously affirm his belief in every article of the creed, he should get out. It is dis-

honest for him to draw a salary on the basis of a contract that he will preach a certain creed and then not preach it.”

Denominations which adhere to creeds that are handed down from generation to generation are compelled to accept a much more elastic interpretation than this. Ministers and professors of ecclesiastical law within these communions parse and analyze their creeds with great care and skill in order to ease the consciences of those who find subscription difficult. The average Congregational minister who reads Newman's Tract XC is likely to be astounded at the subtlety of his argument and the ingenuity with which he appears to show that certain sentences, phrases, and words of the thirty-nine Articles may truthfully be interpreted as meaning the precise reverse of what the original authors of the creed intended those words to mean. The author of "The Kernel and the Husk" sets forth with discriminating logic the right of a clergyman to lead his congregation in the Athenasian Creed although himself rejecting it; and the right of a believer in a non-miraculous Christianity to remain a minister of the Church of England. Rev. E. W. Lummis, of Cambridge, England, in a recent article in the Hibbert Journal on "Veracity and Conformity" takes the ground that the words of the liturgy of the Church are not intended to declare any personal opinion, and that it is a wicked waste for the Church so to construe her creeds as that her most conscientious ministers shall be driven out while those less scrupulous remain within.

If any good end is served by the exclusion of these men from the ministry, let them remain in exile. The welfare of the Church may well outweigh much agony of soul in individual Christians. But it is difficult to see what good end is served by the exclusion of the scrupulously veracious, while their less scrupulous fellows (less scrupulous on this single point) are admitted. Rather it would appear that the Church herself must suffer by the loss of some of the best and best-equipped minds from her service. Is there any way of bringing it about that a scrupulous verbal veracity shall no longer disqualify for Holy Orders?

It might be possible to save these wasted men for the Church by establishing in the common sense of the Church itself a conviction that the words of her liturgy are not meant to declare any personal opinion, or to bind the intellect within a narrow hedge of doctrine; that their whole value lies in their appeal to faith, hope, and love, those weightier matters, beside which doctrines and forms are idle things. After all, verbal veracity is the lowest stage of truth, and only exists so long as words are interpreted on their lowest plane, as vehicles of mere information. Is religion concerned with this? Her interest lies in wisdom, power, and holiness. The noble liturgy of the English Church, rescued from the sordid mesh of opinion and dialectic, would be found rich in the truth of wisdom, which has inspired all that is best in Protestantism, and the truth of power, which has lived through all the corruptions of Catholicism, and would help us all, liberal and orthodox, towards the higher wisdom of holiness. If this last way could be pursued it would soon make any other way superfluous; for it would inevitably happen, with or without statutory revision, that jarring and unhelpful phrases would disappear, by disuse, from the liturgy, leaving the rest in greater beauty and strength. With them would go the pest of esotericism, some scandal, and much pain. Perhaps this mode of ending the evil, even if the time is not yet quite ripe for it, may soon dawn above the horizon of the possible.

A thoughtful article in the *London Churchman*, while not going to this length, protests earnestly against the Athanasian Creed as "a veritable wire-entanglement of orthodoxy, charged with the high power electricity of the threat of damnation." Protesting mildly against the extreme elasticity of conscience of those who follow the logic of Newman, it nevertheless maintains that corporate worship requires the employment of forms which must not be understood as expressing individual assent at every point.

It is not easy for Congregationalists to give themselves the benefit of these elasticities; but it is a fair question whether we as a denomination have not been too literal in the interpretation of such creeds as we hold. Certainly it is not right that we should leap from the frying-pan into the fire, or that beginning with the highest regard for spiritual freedom we should interpret such creeds as obtain among us in terms that make for spiritual bondage. With a great price our fathers obtained freedom from the tyranny of creeds. We, if we employ confessions of faith, should see to it that the form

of our subscription to them, and especially that the form of any subscription that we impose upon others, shall be in keeping with our traditions of spiritual liberty.

An interesting incident which seems to the author to bear upon this principle, was raised in the Congregational Conference of Illinois in 1915, by a memorial from the Elgin Association, introduced by the honored pastor of the Elgin Church, Rev. Charles L. Morgan, D. D., in which, among other things, the Conference was asked to go on record, affirming the faith of its members "in the deity of Jesus, His miraculous birth, His miraculous works, and His miraculous resurrection." This was referred to the Committee on Polity, of which committee the author of the present volume is chairman, and this committee in the Rockford meeting of 1915 and in a further report at Rogers Park in 1916, reported adversely, taking the ground that the resolutions of the Elgin Association virtually sought to impose a creed on the State Conference. To this, Dr. Morgan, a courteous and able disputant, replied, and his address is printed in the Minutes of the State Conference:

Let me emphasize this, that in affirming our continued faith in the deity of Jesus, his miraculous birth, works and resurrection, we are not making a creed, nor are we imposing any test whatever upon any church or minister of this Conference. The Report of the Polity Committee, in the portrayal of these Resolutions as a "test" has wholly forgotten Paul's counsel to "fight not as beating the air." The Resolutions offer no slightest suggestion of a "creed test." For one, I should most vigorously oppose the establishment of any creed test. I believe, as do we all, in the perfect liberty of every Church, Association and Conference to make its own creed statements, so long as we remember the unity of the spirit in the evangelical bond of faith.

I believe in no creedal tests, and I protest as strongly as any can against the literal statement of any creed, ancient or modern, becoming the binding test of either church or ministerial fellowship.

The adoption of the resolution reaffirming our faith in the deity of Jesus, in His miraculous birth, His miraculous works and His miraculous resurrection will simply mean our testimony to our continued faith in those four great truths which have been the very warp and woof of practically every great Christian creed for nine-

teen centuries. No one can truthfully deny this. That "the Word became flesh;" that Jesus was God present in the flesh, the rightful object of a worship which, for any but God, would be gross sacrilege; that this Son of God was miraculously born into this world; that He wrought miracles; that He miraculously rose from the dead; why these are the monumental facts on which Christianity has, for all the centuries, rested. They are the facts, without which, Christianity could not have been, and without which, as history has shown, the power of the Church quickly vanishes.

That, when, as a Conference, we are asked to reaffirm our faith in these great facts, we should decline on the ground that so we assent to "a test" (as the Committee has mistakenly intimated) is to wholly misconceive the intent of the Resolutions. Such an assent establishes no test whatever, nor is it so intended. It is simply to vote our reaffirmation of those great truths. The reason presented by the Polity Committee for the refusal of such assent is a fallacious one. Indeed, none more strenuously than its honored Chairman has repeatedly insisted that no creed ever adopted by our churches was adopted as a test. How much less, then, can a simple vote of confidence in such basal truths of Christianity be a test? It is an argument which evades the real issue and seeks to avoid the reaffirmation of these truths by skillful dialectics. Surely the members of this Conference know that from twelve to fourteen times, either directly or through our representatives, our churches, during the past 300 years have declared their faith in creeds already existing or in credal statements of their own. We all deny that any of these creeds are "tests," and yet our Polity Committee insists that such a simple vote of confidence as you are asked to pass in these four fundamental truths will be such "a test" as we cannot wisely adopt. I think the inconsistency of such an attitude must be clear to all.

Brethren, for this Conference to deliberately refuse assent to Resolutions affirming faith in these central truths, would seem to me one of the most serious misfortunes that can befall our churches. No dust of rhetoric or casuistry respecting the attitude of our churches towards creeds, will blind the great membership of our churches to the real significance of such a refusal. It will say that the ministers and laymen, comprising this Conference, while, in one breath declaring allegiance to the faith of the fathers, in almost the same breath refused assent to four of those great truths without which that faith could never have had the slightest value.

To this earnest appeal, however, the answer in the light of our Congregational traditions is plain. The question is not whether the members of the Congregational Conference of Illinois believe or do not believe in the doctrines embodied in the Elgin Quadrilateral. Their refusal to affirm their faith in these particular terms affords no presumption that

they do not so believe. Not even so good and honored a man as the late pastor of the Elgin Church has a right to impose his form of stating these four, or any other four, doctrines, on one of the least of his brethren, much less upon all his brethren. Not only has the Elgin Association, being a smaller and constituent body, no right to impose its creed upon the State Conference, but the State Conference, being larger, and including in its membership the whole of the Elgin Association, has no right to impose its own creed upon the Elgin Association, or upon the Elgin Church, or the Elgin pastor. A very much larger principle is at stake in any such matter than appears on the face of it. The Congregational churches and their ministers stand fast in the liberality wherewith Christ hath made them free, and their affirmation of their freedom is no presumption that they are disloyal to any particular article of faith, however strongly they may resist an attempt to compel them to stand and deliver in terms of the faith of some other person or ecclesiastical body. So the Conference decided at its meeting in Galesburg in May 1917, when it declined to endorse the Elgin Memorial. Those who insist that a creed must be interpreted in its baldest and most uncompromising form, and that those who accept it are to be permitted no latitude of interpretation, may profitably consider some facts which become patent as soon as we undertake a study of the history of creeds. One of these is that nearly all creeds represent the triumph of majority over a minority. Some of them originated in heated debate and were passed by a relatively small majority. If we are to assume that the Spirit of God was granted in some measure to the majority of the assembly, which enacted the creed, are we wholly to deny the guidance of the same Spirit to those who were in the minority? May it not have been true that the majority wrought into its declaration an over-statement of that aspect of the truth which constituted the chief message of the creed, and that the creed would more nearly have em-

bodied the whole counsel of God if it had included some aspects of truth which were vainly urged by the minority and ruthlessly voted down? Are we sure that we can honor the Spirit of God in the men who succeeded in getting their views enacted in the creed if we dishonor the Spirit of God in the often equally intelligent, sincere and righteous minority, which, but for some fortuitous incident might have given to the creed a very different emphasis with respect to some of its doctrine?

The promise of Christ to his Church is that the Holy Spirit is to lead the Church into all truth; that promise must never be restricted in such fashion as to imply a monopoly of the Holy Spirit by any particular group. Sabatier in his notable work, "Religions of Authority," sets forth in earnest and truthful terms the amplitude of this promise, and the inevitable evil that has resulted from the many limitations which from time to time have been put upon it.

Jesus Christ promised his disciples the help and guidance of the Spirit of God, in all circumstances, for all their needs, and in all that they should have to do or suffer, but in no sense to constitute a new Scriptural code to which Christians would thenceforth be forever enslaved. How, then, came it to pass that the Church learned to distrust the Master's promise, and hastened to build up again that which he destroyed—the absolute authority of the so-called divine letter?

The Church was incredulous, and it still is so as regards the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. She has limited inspiration to bishops, the hierarchy, the Pope, or else to the authors whose writings are collected between the covers of the New Testament, and has denied it to ordinary Christians; and for them she has created a new authority, thus depriving them of the liberty which Christ conquered for every son of the Father.

The dogma which made the Holy Spirit a metaphysical entity paralyzed and killed his dynamic influence in the Christian life. In the Old Testament and the New the Spirit represented the divine principle in the human soul, the imminent influence of the living God. Elevated into the empyrean of the Trinity it has become transcendent, not less apart from the world than the two other divine persons, and thus it too has need of a mediating organ by which to be revealed and made active; it has become incarnate and therefore localized either in the Catholic hierarchy or in the code of Scripture. Nothing could be farther from the thought or promise of Jesus.—Sabatier: "Religions of Authority," p. 299.

The promise of the Holy Spirit was given not to the apostles but to the whole Church. The cloven fiery tongues sat not upon the apostolic twelve alone but upon the whole company, men and women, numbering one hundred and twenty. The promise was not for the clergy alone; it belonged and still belongs to the laity as well. The promise was not for that age only, but was for every age. The promise was not for majorities alone, but belongs also in their due measure to minorities. If we are to assume, as we ought to assume, that the Holy Spirit was granted to Augustine, in his stout defense of what in his day was accounted to be orthodoxy, we are justified also in believing that the Holy Spirit was given in some measure to the men whom he opposed, some of whom were hardly inferior to him in character, scholarship and piety, eminent as Augustine was in all these particulars. If we are to assume, as we may and probably should, that the Holy Spirit was present in the council of Nicea, which in 325 A. D., with great unanimity condemned Arius and his heresies, how can we deny the presence of that same Spirit in the Synods of Tyre and Jerusalem ten years later, approving the teachings of Arius as being soundly orthodox? If we are to ascribe to Calvin a large measure of the Spirit of God in his admirable defense of the sovereignty of God, how can we deny a measure of the same Spirit to Socinus, who in spite of bitter persecution proclaimed with equal circumspection and courage the truths which were needed to balance the teachings of Calvin, but which in that age could only be regarded as destructive of fundamental truth and utterly irreconcilable with doctrines necessary to salvation? How can we ever be safe in affirming a creed that is essentially Calvinistic without leaving mental room for those enlargements and counterbalancing considerations which the Holy Spirit still working in the church now shows to have been lacking in the particular system, which, rather fortunately on the whole, were able to get themselves wrought into creeds, but always at some expense of truth ignored, suppressed, or denied?

The promise of the Holy Spirit is not only to those who are intellectually right; it is also to those who are wrong in their thinking but right in their faith. Some of the best gifts of the Spirit have come through human errors that led to larger truths. God, who makes even the wrath of man to praise Him, makes also the errors of good men sometimes to be productive of good. It is of the Lord's mercies that many of our mistakes of judgment do less harm than logically they ought to do. If the Holy Spirit were granted only to those who understand all truth, the Spirit still would be reserved for some long distant future. But the Spirit is given to men now much in error, leading them progressively into a slightly larger measure of truth, as they are able to bear it.

When men affirm, as they sometimes do affirm, that a creed must never be uttered with mental reservation, the answer is that no human creed can ever be uttered in any other way. There must always be a reservation for the truth which the creed could not contain and which it may have been framed expressly to deny.

Most creeds have risen out of religious controversy, in which one side or the other has triumphed by a somewhat narrow margin. The Nicene Creed is supposed to have grown out of the controversy, which banished Arius. The Council of Nicea drove him forth, but it was not long before a reaction set in and Arius was invited to return. Great preparation was made to receive him back at court. Constantinople was assembled in all pomp and circumstance with the emperor and bishops and the officials of church and state when Arius suddenly died. In his death some people saw the treacherous act of his enemies, and others a mark of Divine approval, sealing with the high honors of heaven the recognition which the church on earth at last had given to the truth. Now the spirit which drove Arius forth into exile managed to get itself written into a creed; and if Arius had lived to establish himself in power in Constantinople, the theories which he held

would very likely have gotten themselves into another creed, issued by a council of quite as high authority and composed in good part of the same people. Who knows whether the unwritten creed of Arius would have been more heterodox in its way than the creed of his enemies was in their way? Who knows at what precise moment in the process of shifting majorities the vote must be taken that is to embody the bitterness and dogmatism of an unholy fight into an authoritative creed which all Christians must thereafter profess on pain of eternal damnation?

The Apostles' Creed was not written by the apostles, nor the Nicene Creed by the Council of Nicea, nor the Athanasian Creed by Athanasius, and no one of them is either perfect or final.

Nearly all creeds are compromises. Even when they represent the triumph of a majority over a minority there had to be no little trimming and fitting to make the creed acceptable to the majority. Among the company of those who came at length to a sufficient unanimity to agree upon a creed there existed a considerable variety of opinion. It is reasonable to assume that some approach to unity was reached in the process of discussion, but it is also true that a considerable part of that unity was due to the selection of a sufficiently elastic and ambiguous phraseology to enable all the various parties that came to an ultimate agreement to read their own meanings into the words of the creed. It is a fair question, and one not to be answered by an appeal to the dictionary, whether a creed which came into being by the very reason of its being elastic must now be interpreted with no elasticity. Let us assume, for example, that some council of the early Church composed of five hundred members had in it two hundred who held a doctrine which we may call A, one hundred and twenty-five another doctrine which we may call B, and one hundred and seventy-five a doctrine which we may call C. B and C were able at length to agree upon a form of words which we will

call D, as sufficiently inclusive to express what each of those two factions counted most vital in B and C. By this process a majority of the council was obtained and the creed A was voted down by the advocates of the creed D. Now, it is not only conceivable that A and B might have found like common ground and also a working majority in another creed E; or A and C might have attained a different result in another creed F. But what is more important for us is that there are living men whose interpretation of the truths of Christian experience would lead them independently to express their faith in terms of G, H and I, but who have inherited a ritual, or credal declaration in terms of D. Are they to be denied such liberty as B and C secured in the formulation of D? Manifestly not. A creed which owes its adoption to its vagueness and ambiguity at the time when it was formulated is not to be forced upon men of another generation as though it were capable of one and only one interpretation.

No man can formulate a creed which completely records his own inmost convictions, much less can any man formulate the truth of his own convictions in terms which completely satisfy the mental and spiritual requirements of any other man. President Henry Churchill King has well said:

Complete uniformity of belief and statement is impossible, in the first place, because it is difficult indeed for any of us to tell our real inner creed. That creed is the creed that finds expression in life. It is the statement of those assumptions that are implied in deeds and spirit. The will, thus, has its creed as well as the intellect, and the truths of religion must be wrought out rather than merely thought out. And the intellect can formulate only very imperfectly the truth that the will has wrought out. How comparatively empty and flat the greatest truths sound from one who does not seem to have lived them into existence. On the other hand, how significant the simplest truths become when they are backed by a great life. Now the truth which so lives for a man is his real creed, and that real creed he can better state at the end of his complete experience than at the beginning. It is still more impossible for another's formulation completely to shadow forth this whole life-experience. This is not at all to join the company of those who wish to "rule the doctrinal element out of their religion." It is quite a different thing from that, to insist that only the whole mind can reach the essential

meaning of things; that all Christian doctrine looks directly to life, means something for life and grows directly out of life; that no series of propositions can possibly set forth the whole meaning of the Christian life; and that the acceptance of any set of propositions is not the acceptance of Christianity. Thinking there must be, earnest and hard, and every possible attempt to express the fullest results of this thinking in ordered statement of doctrine—to reach a comprehensive intellectual unity that shall bring our religious beliefs into relation to all the rest of our thinking. All this is highly important and helpful. But even so, doctrine is means, not end; an expression of life rather than life itself. The intellect serves life but may not dominate it.

Complete uniformity of belief and statement therefore is impossible, first of all, because we are none of us really able to make an accurate statement even of our own creed. It is impossible also because if two persons should agree in adopting the same formula of words, even these same words must be interpreted out of different inheritances, training, environment and experiences, and the emphasis and meaning will change accordingly; and they will change even in the same individual from time to time. Unalterable doctrine is thus impossible. Any true acceptance of a creed involves every time a kind of creative activity on the part of the individual affirming the confession. This means that the different temperament, the different point of view and the different emphasis cannot help affecting every man's creed. It is true of a man's creed as of his environment that the only effective portions are those to which he attends; and the points of attention vary from time to time.

But it is not only true that complete uniformity of belief and statement is impossible, it is equally true that were it attainable, it would be undesirable. We are dealing with those truths that have to do with the infinite God himself, and with human relations to that infinite God. We can only approximate to the infinite truth so sought by seeking from every soul the most honest expression of his experience and so sharing our experiences with each other. The situation is like that illustrated by Leibnitz's figure of the mirrors surrounding the market-place. Each mirror gives its reflection from one point of view, and it is only by combining all these reflections that the complete view of all the aspects of the market-place could result. We need indispensably the supplementing help that comes from sharing in the best visions of other souls.—“The Confession of Christ,” in *Constructive Quarterly*, ii, 258-260.

Creeds require to be interpreted in the light of their history. The technical expressions which they contain cannot be accurately interpreted apart from the meaning which they acquired in the discussions in which they originated. Often a study of the history out of which a creed emerged gives to the student a higher appreciation of the document in its relation to

history, while emphasizing anew the caution with which they are to be accepted as an expression of the faith of a modern Christian. Prof. William A. Curtis, of the University of Aberdeen, in an appreciative article concerning creeds, spoke from the standpoint of a Scotch Presbyterian in favor of a reasonable measure of liberty in their interpretation.

It follows that as documents of history they must be historically studied and understood. They are full of technical terms, of clauses which to the scholar call up the memory of definite controversies, of phrases which betray their locality and school of opinion. Like the Apostles' Creed itself, they are monuments of well-weighed compromise and deliberate compilation. Like the Bible itself, they reflect the light of divine truth streaming from many minds. To accept them with unquestioning literalness is to accept them unintelligently and to do them dishonour. Place yourself at the standpoint of their framers and their age, allow for the fashion of their thought as you would allow for the idiom and vocabulary of their language, bear in mind the things they did not know, the history they had not read, the questions they had not raised and faced, the experience they had not enjoyed, the scholarship beyond their reach, and you will not do them the injustice of making them oracles for all time, or representing that their sceptre and their nod can arrest the tide of divine revelation and of human science. To know their origin and their historical setting is certainly to be in a position to judge them critically, and to have their oracular mysteriousness dispelled, but it is also to have one's imagination stirred and one's sympathy aroused. I can scarcely think of one of them which close historical acquaintance has not thus transformed for me.—The Hibbert Journal, xii, p. 320.

It is always to be remembered in the interpretation of creeds that he who subscribes to a creed owes something to the future as well as to the past. Is the man of to-day to be stopped from thinking in terms of his own day because his faith has been expressed for him in a creed either of the fourth or of the sixteenth century? How came that creed of the fourth century to be written, seeing there were already in existence creeds from an earlier century? Manifestly because the men of the fourth century had courage to confess their faith in terms of the thought of the fourth century. How came it that with creeds of the fourth and succeeding centuries in their possession, the men of the sixteenth century had

courage to make new creeds? How shall a man be loyal to those very creeds if he does not have at least as much courage as the makers of them?

Clearly it is a great advantage to a Church to have a common body of doctrine, greater even than a common mode of worship or organization, and it is a sacred duty to profess as much of the truth as common conviction will allow. Church and congregation, moreover, are entitled to receive some guarantee that the pastor of souls will teach the truth accredited, adequately and loyally. Confessions accepted or subscribed are meant to serve both ends. Broadly speaking, they have done so reasonably well, and they deserve our deepest gratitude. But to use or enforce them legally in a hard and fast way is unchristian and unwise. The Church does not exist for the Confession, however venerable, but the Confession for the Church. The minister of Jesus Christ is not the special pleader of a particular theology, retained for a fee. The right to formulate the doctrinal content of faith is the prerogative and monopoly of no single age or generation, however confident of itself, and however competent. God is not the God of the dead, however great, but of the living; and His Truth, though it is eternal, is not stationary. If Faith has hands with which to cling, it has also feet with which to move forward. It would be well if we, who honor our ancient formularies, and resent the slightest invasion of their sacrosanctity, showed a little more confidence in their ability to bear handling and comparison. If better articles of faith were offered to us than we possess traditionally, would it not be our religious duty to accept them? Have we learned nothing and unlearned nothing worth recording since the Assemblies of Dordrecht and Westminster? It is natural for men who love the Ark of the Covenant to stretch out impulsive hands to steady it as the wheels of the wagon lurch in the ruts of the rough highway of experience, but there is a fear on its behalf that is ungodly as well as unmanly. The same solemn and indeed overwhelming responsibility which rested on our fathers in the Reformation to purify their testimony to God's Truth rests also on their sons in every succeeding age. When men to-day rail at our standards, not always by any means without cause or in disloyalty, they may fairly be asked to show us a better for all purposes and for all orders of mind, and we may fairly be asked to preserve an open mind for its reception when it is produced. For my part, as an Assembly juryman in any case of doctrinal discipline, I would refuse to take a merely legal view of any office-bearer's departure from our standards. I would feel bound to acknowledge that every minister has a constituent share of his own in the admitted right of that Court of which he is a member to move in doctrine at the bidding of science or of conscience or of the Divine Spirit. I think it is idle and sophistical to say that the General Assembly must enact permission before the individual may preach new ideas, for the Assembly is but a court of individuals, and its movement and initiative are necessarily slower and later than

theirs. The universal Fatherhood of God and the sacred duty of missions to the heathen are credenda which many of our Churches have never yet authorized by statute or confession, yet, God be thanked, we have long since been guided and constrained by a higher voice than ecclesiastical enactment to proclaim them. It is thus, I submit, impossible and unchristian to interpret our standards in a narrow legal fashion. We would not do it with Scripture; we dare not do it with them. With the memory of what legalism did in the Gospel narrative, in the unreformed Church, and in the Protestant Churches during the seventeenth century, we have little excuse for relapsing into it again.

But, you say, may a minister of religion preach as he pleases with impunity? I answer only that disloyalty is not to be judged by narrow rules. We must be consistent and we must be fair. There is such a thing as disloyalty to the present and to the future to be kept in view. The letter of ancient standards even a lawyer will, if he can, interpret historically, in the light of the conditions of their age and the intentions of their framers. Even a lawyer, too, will take into account the effect of divergent use and wont in subsequent generations as modifying their force when employed as documents forming the basis of a contract of professional service. To subscribe an ancient Confession, itself originally framed by majority findings and through innumerable compromises in debate, itself also interpreted in our own time by different schools of opinion and types of scholarship, is obviously anything but a simple act. It implies, of course, a solemn compact and pledge of loyalty to the past, and of loyalty to the living Church, but it involves no less an obligation to the Church's living Head and His indwelling Spirit. It seems to me—and I write under a profound sense of the gravity of the practical issue—that no branch of the Christian Church has any right to foreclose, irrevocably or irreformably, once for all, the form of its doctrinal testimony. Every Church, if it has eyes for the lessons of history since the dawn of the Reformation, ought to hold its property and administer its discipline on the explicit understanding that its hand is free from age to age to write afresh the sentences which utter its living belief in the living God. The Church needs freemen, not slaves, for its ministry. Even the world, though it delights in opinions that are dogmatic, and dearly loves "plain answers" to ugly questions, is not enamoured of men who proclaim the glorious liberty of the Gospel while themselves in confessional shackles. Of course, there is risk as well as dignity in freedom. Every employer and every offerer of free labour knows that. But is it for that reason better to go back to slavery? Select your men, train your men, trust your men, as your Master did. Run openly the risk of finding one man in twelve a traitor, as He did, and each of twelve slow of heart and mind. For after all no articles of indenture, however strict, can possibly guarantee the future fidelity and competence of the employed. He is a blind reader of Church history who does not know that Articles of Faith are powerless to preserve intellectual uniformity. The Presbyterian Churches in the eighteenth century were anything but faithful to their standards;

yet they did not make a single formal change in them, deeming it apparently not worth their while. There is a better way, a surer guarantee. In his "Arians of the Fourth Century," John Henry Newman, who will not be credited with indifference to any lawful means of securing doctrinal conformity and identity, makes a memorable admission concerning what he calls "that novel though necessary measure of imposing an authoritative creed on those whom the Church invested with the office of teaching." He says: "If I avow my belief that freedom from symbols and articles is abstractedly the highest state of Christian communion, and the peculiar privilege of the primitive Church, it is not from any tenderness towards that proud impatience of control in which many exult as in a virtue, but first, because technicality and formalism are, in their degree, inevitable results of public confessions of faith; and next, because, where confessions do not exist, the mysteries of Divine truth, instead of being exposed to the gaze of the profane and uninstructed, are kept hidden in the bosom of the Church far more faithfully than is otherwise possible, and reserved, by a private teaching through the channel of her ministers, as rewards in due measure and season for those who are prepared to profit by them—for those, that is, who are diligently passing through the successive stages of faith and obedience.—Prof. W. A. Curtis, of Aberdeen, in *Hibbert Journal*, xii, 327-330.

The principle that a teacher or a preacher is a discoverer of truth and must be free to discover it has been ably set forth by Dean John H. Wigmore of the Northwestern University School of Law in an article in *The Nation* on "Academic Freedom" in which he draws an important analogy from the principle of judicial immunity. That principle rooted in three centuries of English and American decisions is that a superior or supreme judge is not liable to civil action on any ground whatever for a wrong done by him while acting as a judge on matters within his own jurisdiction. The protection granted him while in the exercise of his judicial function is so full as to seem extreme. As applied in the courts it freely assumes that the judge is human and fallible, liable to prejudice and every other human failing, but it holds that it is impossible adequately to protect the righteous judge without granting immunity also to the ignorant, the biased, the prejudiced judge. Mr. Justice Field of the United States Supreme Court enunciated this principle in the case of *Bradley vs. Fisher* (13 Wallace, 336; 1871).

If civil actions could be maintained in such cases against the judge, because the losing party should see fit to allege in his complaint that the acts of the judge were done with partiality, or maliciously, or corruptly, the protection essential to judicial independence would be entirely swept away. Few persons, sufficiently irritated to institute an action against a judge for his judicial acts, would hesitate to ascribe any character to the acts which would be essential to the maintenance of an action. If upon such allegations a judge could be compelled to answer in a civil action for his judicial acts, . . . he would be subjected for his protection to the necessity of . . . showing the judge before whom he might be summoned by the losing party . . . that he had decided as he did with judicial integrity. And the second judge would be subjected to a similar burden in his turn.

In other words, says Dean Wigmore, were the rule otherwise, for the sake of reaching the one judge in a hundred who might act corruptly or maliciously, then the ninety-and-nine honest and competent judges would be likely to be harassed continually by complainants alleging this malice or corruptness as a nominal pretext for their claim. And the profound ill-consequence is obvious. The honest judge's peace of mind would be gone.

The analogy is plain. The object of academic immunity is the protection of the competent thinker in that unhampered research and discussion which alone leads to the discovery of scientific truth. But the protection cannot be limited to the competent thinker. It must extend to all academic scholars, including the incompetent, the extremists, the radicals, the temperamentally biased, and the tactless. For otherwise it is easy enough to find the charge brought that the particular supposed offender is incompetent, or tactless, or what-ever else it is that falls outside the line of protection. His case is precisely like that of the judge in this respect. The offended party—be he trustee, regent, editor, ecclesiastic, parent, or man in the street—is always likely to allege that the doctrine advanced by the academic incumbent, or the manner of advancing it, is such as reveals plainly the academic man's incompetence to be a professor of true science or a safe guide of youth. And, in fact, almost all of the instances publicly discussed do exhibit precisely that feature. The parallel is almost amusingly exact. Citations are needless; read any of the documents recently published in any of the instances.

If we do not appreciate this aspect of the problem, we are in danger of ignoring entirely the real basis for defending academic freedom. That basis is that it is impossible to protect the competent scholar, who by general concession merits protection both in the substance and in the form of his utterances, without also protecting the incompetent one, who in himself alone might be said not to merit protection; because, if a line of definition be attempted, the offended party will always believe and allege that the supposed offender falls outside that line, and thus the whole class of competent men will always be hampered in their research and their utterances by the likelihood of being required to defend themselves against this allegation.

The question of academic freedom and of freedom in the pulpit is far more complex than those suppose who assume that a minister or a professor is a hired man employed to teach a fixed system of fully discovered truth. There is no such system either in the Bible or out of it. Much less does any creed contain such a system. The final interviews of Jesus with his disciples thrill with the spirit of truth yet to be revealed. He taught them so much of the truth as they were able to bear and promised them the guidance of the Spirit to lead them into all truth. That promise was not limited to that or any succeeding age. If the Spirit ever undertook a work of interpretation and of continuation in the application of the principles of Jesus to the later life of the church that guidance must continue as long as the need continues. Not yet certainly has the need of guidance ceased. The truth which Jesus taught has often been spoken of as a deposit to be sacredly guarded; and the figure has a certain force and authority; but it is the deposit of a seed, a living growing entity. The preacher is more than the conservator of a system of truth embodied in a confession of faith. He is a revealer of truth. It is his duty having ears to hear what now the Spirit saith unto the churches.

A layman, accustomed to the "hiring and firing" of his employes on the sole basis of his own likes or dislikes, or of their supposed value in promoting the interests of his business, is sometimes prone to apply the standards of the office and the shop to the minister and to say, "Our church has a creed which satisfies us; let the minister preach it or let him go. We are not interested in any new revelations he may suppose himself to possess. We do not care to discuss with him whether our creed is true or not. There it is; let him take it or leave it."

Laymen have talked after this fashion, and it was language most unbecoming in any man professing to be a servant of Christ, and is based on an idea thoroughly dishonoring to the ministry. The minister of the gospel is no man's servant;

he is not anybody's hired man. It is nobody's privilege to hire him and fire him for doing or not doing what some arrogant contributor to the church thinks he ought or ought not to do. The minister is a prophet of God, whose duty it is to discover in all the ways he may, what the Lord would reveal to the people of his church. A part of that truth previously discovered is embodied in very faulty forms of expression in the church creed. It is not a finality. No one has a right to assume that it is a finality. The church ought to expect to outgrow it, and no one is presumably so competent to discover when it may be outgrown as the man who has been called of God and the church to be a proclaimer of the Gospel of Christ in terms of his own generation.

A minister has no right to abuse his liberty, nor treat the creed of his church with disrespect even if the time has come when it ought to be modified or superseded. He may not properly regard it with levity or scorn. It is the high water mark of religious and theological opinion at one period in the life of the institution whose continuity and welfare he is glad to promote.

A council was called in Cambridge, Mass., to install as its minister a bright but erratic young theological graduate. On his examination it proved that he had paid no attention to the confession of faith of the church to whose pastorate he was called, considered it wholly unnecessary that he should have read it, and not only did not believe it but held it in no particular reverence. The Council very properly refused to install him. He has had a career in literature more successful than he probably would have had in that pastorate.

A professor in one of our Congregational theological seminaries published a book which was declared to be at variance with the creed of the institution. He answered that it was not contradictory to the said creed, and that a subsequent volume, a sequel to the first, would show his essential conformity to the seminary creed. On this representation the directors of the

seminary granted him a year's leave of absence, with salary. The succeeding volume did not show the anticipated harmony of view between the professor and the creed, and he was dismissed from the seminary faculty.

It is not by any means certain that this is what ought to have been done. This professor had an indefeasible right to insist that his view of truth and the view of the good men who made the creed should both be tested by the Word of God. He had a right to insist that no creed should be permitted permanently to stand the authoritative declaration of truth as held by a Congregational institution. He had a right to demand that the living man who wrote the book and the dead men who made the creed should be weighed in an even balance.

The Spirit of God is not monopolized by the minister; that Spirit is poured out upon the whole body of the church and the church has a right to its judgment of truth as really as the minister, but that judgment must be according to spiritual standards and not according to the standards of commerce. Many a minister has been expelled from his pulpit at the behest of some arrogant layman, who pretended to no higher system of judgment than that which he would have applied to his own stenographer. "Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, and he himself is judged of no man." (1 Cor. 2: 14, 15)

No layman is competent to sit in judgment of his minister in spiritual things so long as he himself judges on the basis of things commercial. The minister, if he truly judges with his spiritual judgment, stands before his God and should stand before his congregation immeasurably lifted above the judgment of all such worldly standards. Judging spiritually, he judgeth all things and is judged by no man.

It is true that in the Congregational theory the minister is a member of the church and subject to it in all matters re-

lating to his own Christian life and practice, but it is not true that the congregation, much less any one member of it, is sole judge of what the minister may or should teach, or of his conformity or non-conformity to the standards of orthodoxy. Such a doctrine would have been instantly repudiated by all the early Puritan ministers and should not for a moment be tolerated in modern Congregationalism.

Across the face of every Congregational creed is writ large this fundamental principle of Congregational assent, namely, that every creed is an imperfect expression of the truth it endeavors to embody, and that no creed can ever stand upon the same plane of authority with the Holy Scriptures interpreted by the spirit that gave them. It is not necessary that a creed should state in explicit terms its own limitations nor contain an avowed disclaimer on behalf of those who assent to it. These limitations are inherent in the nature of the document and of the act of subscription. He who accepts a creed in Congregationalism accepts not its *ipsisima verba* but the substance of faith, which from age to age has been in all creeds.

### III.- CREEDS AND THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

The essential sin of the unchanging creed is that it violates the Second Commandment. We do greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures, if we suppose that the plastic arts are more prone than any other arts to the making of false objects of worship. Sculpture and painting are not the only means by which men create images of God and compel men to worship them.

May not the paintings of our Lord, imperfect as they are, yet the work of men who have given their lives to attempts to make real their highest conception of the look of the Saviour of men, be an aid to our devotion? Before such a picture, or a statue of Christ, carved by an earnest soul who wished to make his best thought of God incarnate in stone or bronze where it might bless him and others, why might we not bow and pray and be the better for it? Very likely we might.

But is not this the essential evil of idolatry, that though in the first generation it may really aid devotion, it fastens on succeeding generations an object of worship which they have out grown, yet which they may not discard? Those still live who love it, and they themselves have been taught to love it; that which was the high-water mark of one generation's devotion to God will become to the next, ere yet that first generation has passed from the earth, an insuperable barrier to the same devotion. God meant that men should grow. A graven image limits growth: and when men cease to grow better they grow worse.

Well may we rejoice that God determined to stamp out idol-worship though to do it obliterated nations. Well may we

rejoice that the Lord our God is jealous and, because of the inevitable tendency of idolatry to visit its iniquities upon the children to the third and fourth generation, has sent the iconoclast and conqueror with hammer and torch and sword, where men have made a lie of the image of God.

Every thought we have of God is but an approach to the truth. We cannot find out the Almighty to perfection. Every revelation of God to us is of necessity minified and even discolored by our ignorance and previous training. God would teach us some truths concerning Himself through the words of inspired men, mostly on current or prospective events; these do not reveal God directly, but leave us to infer some things about Him. He would reveal some other truths through an elaborate ritual and system of sacrifice, once for its temporary uses approved by Him, but now in view of the growth of knowledge concerning Him, laid aside as something outgrown, though still worthy of preservation for historic purposes, and to give added meaning and perspective to more perfect revelations. He would show us more of Himself through Jesus Christ, in whom we behold the Divine Nature amid the limitations of a human body and the progress of a human development and experience. He would have us learn other truths concerning Himself through our own nature and that of the world which He has made. He would have us learn other truths concerning Himself through a divine institution, the Church, in which He is present through the Holy Spirit, and whose history, together with the character of the men and women who have adorned it, shows wonderfully His power and goodness. Yet all these, no one of them perfectly understood, cannot show us all that God is. By a multitude of figures and a variety of names He has endeavored to make us understand this or that truth concerning Him—He is a Shepherd, a King, a Husbandman, a Father, a Bridegroom, the Captain of a host; He appears in a cloud, a flame, an angelic form; all these manifestations reveal some truth, but the sum of them does not

reveal the sum of truth about God. They are the pieces of glass in the kaleidoscope of the individual mind; each is the fragment of the real truth, and the whole are capable of many combinations.

Well may we admire the labor and marvel at the skill and spiritual insight of the Church fathers of the early centuries. The creeds and systems into which they wrought their interpretations of Scripture and their thoughts of God are, many of them, wonderful productions. But their theories of God's sovereignty, their exact chart of His attributes, their reduction of divinity to a formula, their graven image of His character, ought not to be the limit of our search for God. Their grouping of the manifold revelations of God in an attempt to make clear his threefold nature may be helpful to us up to a certain point, but their hard and mechanical doctrine of the Trinity, though we may accept it as the best possible at present for ourselves, should never be fastened upon others as the *ne plus ultra* of Christian insight and discovery, nor even accepted by ourselves as final truth. The analogies by which our fathers of later generations attempted to set forth the great doctrines of Christianity, close as was their walk with God, clear as was their view of many of the most essential truths concerning God, should interpose no limit to our thought. God as the universal Sovereign, means more or less to men, according to their experience with human monarchs. God as the Divine Shepherd means more or less to men, according as they know or do not know the sheep as a domestic animal; and among those who do so know it the idea varies in meaning, according as the sheep are raised in vast herds upon a ranch, or kept in small folds, carefully watched by day and night, and known individually by name; and the figure, however much it may mean to us, is still a figure, and not absolute truth. God as our Father, though this figure is that taught us by our Saviour Himself, means more or less to us in proportion to our experience and ideal of fatherhood, and

the limitation which we may place upon the application of the pronoun "our." In every age, and, we may believe, in every nation, God has made Himself known to men through the best possible media; and all of these revelations are to be studied earnestly, and their light received with thankfulness; but that former generations should weld their ideas, even their best ones, as fetters upon us, or we ours upon others, and thus keep men from coming to their highest possible knowledge of God—what is this but the making of a graven image, and not only bowing to it, but teaching others, who else might learn better, to do so? And if this were, as it certainly is not, one of the least of the commandments, should not those who break it and teach men so, be least in the kingdom of Heaven? This is no disowning of our ancestors. Thank God for them, for their piety, their unflinching integrity, their godlikeness according to their knowledge of God! They were so great and so good because they refused to be fettered by the past and to worship any image but that which the living God revealed to their own souls through patient study of His Word and earnest strivings after righteousness; but looking with reverence upon the systems which they reared, it is one thing to regard them as sacred mementos of times when the waters divided before the ark they bore, and quite a different thing to regard them as pedestals upon some one of which we must become statues, and forever fasten ourselves in unthinking, unprogressive silence, to their sublime, but defective theories.

Our little systems have their day,

They have their day and cease to be:

They are but lesser lights of Thee,

And Thou, O God, art more than they!

The iconoclast had his place, but this chapter is not meant to be iconoclastic nor even to a mild degree polemic; it simply endeavors to set forth the fact that God meant that men should know Him better and better, and has forbidden any man to darken men's search for the increasing light with systems that

once shed light, but now, in the growing dawn of our knowledge of Him, like a candle-flame in the brightness of an electric arclight have come to cast a shadow.

Every generation must define God in the light of God's progressive revelation. The older theologians defined God in terms of monarchial government, for they knew no other. Has God revealed no new conception of Himself to humanity through the experience of democratic government? To deny that He had done so would be a virtual atheism. It has been true in Theology, as in other disciplines, that necessity is the mother of invention. The experiences of self-government, with all their perils and blunders, have served to show increasingly to men and nations that we have a Republic of God as truly as a Kingdom of God, and that God is working out his own self-expression through human experiences, social and national as well as personal. The idea of a static God is outgrown; we need an adequate God, a God whose life is inwrought with the stuff of the world.

When God spake to Moses, saying, "I am Jehovah: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob as El-Shaddai, but by my name Jehovah was I not known unto them," (Ex. 6: 2, 3), He not only authorized but compelled a new definition of God.

The effect of the disruption of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah on the idea of God must have been tremendous. It brought about a condition in which the nobler prophets were able to conceive of Jehovah as the God not only of two nations but of all nations. Thus Amos declared that the Israelites were no more precious to Jehovah than the Ethiopians; and that even the exodus, in which Jehovah had brought up his people out of Egypt, was no proof that Israel was the only nation He loved, for the Philistines had come up from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir, and the same God, Jehovah, had guided the destinies of these heathen nations (Amos 9: 7, 8). What a remarkable affirmation this is, and how utterly it des-

troys the idea that in the mind of the prophet Jehovah never became anything else than a tribal God!

Just as the exodus and the division of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah resulted in new and larger ideas of God, so must our experiences, personal, national and international enlarge our thought of his majesty and greatness. We must believe in a God who is great enough to strain our old definitions to the breaking point, a God who is the God of the English and of the Germans, of the French and the Austrians, of the Jews and the Gentiles, the Protestants and the Roman Catholics, a God who is as much greater than all our definitions as the river is greater than the cup from which we drink of it, as the ocean is greater than the raindrop which ascended from the ocean and returns to the ocean but refreshes us and gladdens the little spot of earth where we abide. The cupful is of the river and like the river but it is not the whole river; the raindrop is born of the ocean and has its home in the ocean, but the qualities of the ocean are not all to be inferred from the qualities of the raindrop.

The changing needs of successive generations have compelled repeated changes in their definition of God. The second commandment, forbidding us to make a graven image and call it God, applies in its spiritual principle as truly to the art of the creed-maker as that of the manufacturer of graven images. Every generation must have a conception of God adequate to its needs. This necessity has caused a majority of the definitions of God to fall out of their former place in the requirements of human life. A local god, i.e., a tribal god, a god of the land, a god of the sea, a god for some particular need, may satisfy some temporary or particular requirement of human life. But only a religion which proceeds from God himself can afford us a conception of God that is simple enough for primitive ages and great enough for the age in which we live.

The world needs an adequate God, namely, a God whose life is inwrought with that of the world He has made and who

is working His very own life out into adequate expression through human experience.

To some people this is a new conception of God, but really it is not so new as it seems. Something of this sort was in the mind of the apostle John when he said, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. 21: 3).

We have need of a transcendent God, a God who is above all His works, a First Cause whose activity was manifested in the beginning. We must never give up that view of God, but it is unfortunate that many people in holding that view have essentially ruled God out of present-day life. They think of Him as a Great First Cause who operates now only through second causes; a God who, having set in operation these second causes now operative in the world and in human life, has virtually retired from active business; a God whose existence is to be proved by reference to origins rather than from current activities; a God whom we could not infer from anything we now see, but in whom we are to believe by reason of what people saw and heard a long time ago.

To these manifest limitations upon our idea of God are added other hampering limitations invented on supposed behalf of God's own interests. These good people hold to a God who was interested in only one nation, the Jews, and only one department of human life, the sacred as opposed to the secular, and only one place in His universe, heaven as opposed to earth and hell. We are sure that God is subject to no such limitations. If God has to have a hell He is interested in what is going on there, and is doing the very best He can for it under the circumstances. God has made the world, He has not forsaken it, and it is just as much a part of his domain as heaven is. Our God is concerned with origins, but just as much concerned with processes.

The noble utterance of the prophet takes in the whole sweep of human history and considers the afflictions of the people of God, when in a truly inspired declaration he says, "In all their afflictions God was afflicted." God suffers with the sufferings of humanity.

Victor Hugo once said, "He who has seen the sorrows of men has seen nothing; he must see the sorrows of women. He who sees the sorrows of women has seen nothing; he must see the sorrows of children." Might we not add to this, "He who has seen the sorrows of women, men and children has seen nothing; he must see the sorrows of Christ. And yet again, he who has seen the sorrows of Christ has had only a suggestion of the infinite sorrows of God."

There is a conception of God which lifts Him above all possibility of personal sorrow. Knowing the end from the beginning, He serenely contemplates all that is, assured that in the end it will be well. To Him there is no distinction between past, present and future; all that is past and all that is to come constitutes to Him an eternal now. But this is not the idea of God which best harmonizes with our present-day thinking, nor is it that which best represents the highest conception revealed in Holy Writ. God has a personal stake in the personal affairs of the universe. God has intimate personal concern with all that happens in the world. The structure of this planet and of other planets is one in substance, origin and destiny with the structure of the central sun. Not only has it no life apart from the sun, but the solar system is incomplete without it both in importance and in potentiality. So the life of God is in the life of all that He has made and is incomplete without it. The life of God is affected by the life of all the world.

God is the ultimate reality. Our thought of God is our uppermost and outermost mental possibility. Our experience of God is the largest and deepest of all human experiences. In

our thought of God and in our experience of God, God himself participates.

There was a time when men thought of God as a monarch ruling a rebellious world. He was not only a king, but the king of an empire in revolt. It is no caricature of some conceptions of the relation of God to the world to say that God was almost like the warden of a penitentiary, ruling rigorously over an unwilling body of criminals, each one of whom deserved to hang and toward whom even the utmost severity short of eternal damnation was to be considered large and unmerited mercy.

We have come to see clearly that this is not an adequate conception of God. God is a Father and the Father of all His children, good and bad. Whatever He does by way of discipline He does as a father might do. Not only so, as the father's life is the life of the child, so God's life is inwrought into the life of the world. The sorrows of human life are His sorrows. God is working out His own diversified experience in the experiences of humanity. What we work out with fear and trembling God works in us to will and to do His good pleasure.

This conception of God forever does away with the possibility of divine heartlessness. If wicked men go to war and murder one another, God looks upon it not as a thing of no concern to himself, nor yet simply in the light of a just retribution inflicted upon the ill-deserving. God's own life is in the struggle. The life of God is being born again through agony and pain. "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old." (Isaiah 63: 9.)

God suffers to redeem. Not only is He afflicted in the afflictions of His people, but the Angel of His presence saves them. God is no passive sufferer. God is no hopeless, misanthropic invalid. God has not settled down into a condition of

meek acceptance of inevitable sorrow. God suffers that He may save.

The world is to be saved. The sorrows of human life are not hopeless. He who has given us the cross as the triumphant expression of an adequate faith has not left us to suffer hopelessly in the world for which Christ died. God suffers with His people that He may redeem them.

The evil of an unchanging creed is that it leaves no room for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It says "I believe in the Holy Ghost" but leaves very little for the Holy Ghost to do. Its creed is a graven image. For by what process of reasoning can it be shown to be more idolatrous to make gods out of wood than out of words; out of logs than out of logic; out of stones than out of syllogisms; out of dirt than out of definitions? The evil is not in making creeds, any more than it is in painting pictures of Christ; but it is in holding before the eyes of men a work of men's hands as a substitute for the spiritual experience of God. Whosoever shall break one of the least commandments and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. The second commandment is not the least of the commandments, and he violates it who makes an unyielding creed and teaches men so.

#### IV. THE REPEAL OF OBSOLETE CREEDS

It is often exceedingly difficult to accomplish the formal repeal of an obsolete creed. The older it is and hence the farther it is removed from the life of to-day, the more difficult it is to secure its technical repeal. Sentiment will have come to attach its own meanings to venerable words and phrases until it seems a sacrilege to remove it from its time-honored place in the organic law of the church.

Moreover, the proposal to remove it will often rouse this challenge: Why should we not seek to bring our decadent faith up to the level of that expressed in the creed rather than to lower our credal tests to conform to an admittedly changed and presumably deteriorated condition?

This view was strongly presented before the National Council in 1886 in a paper by Dr. George R. Leavitt. A committee had been appointed to report on the state of the churches and ministerial supply, but instead of a report it presented two quite independent papers, one by Dr. Quint on "Ministerial Supply," and the other by Dr. Leavitt in answer to the question whether the disappointingly small accessions to the churches might be due to too high a standard prevalent among them either with respect to Christian duty or doctrinal confession. He assumed that our churches in general "would decline to receive as members, persons who insist upon the liberty to dance, to play cards, to attend the theater and the opera," and to do certain other things which he specified in a rather long list. He admitted that in some places where "local laxity prevailed" a person who did one or more of

these things might conceivably become a member of a Congregational church, and he stated the issue thus:

Perhaps this statement is sufficiently clear and full to bring before us the customary tests restricting admission to our Congregational churches. The question before us is: Will it be wise to modify these tests? It is to be observed that the question is not whether, in our judgment, a person can be hopefully a Christian who is not able to meet these tests, but rather whether we should shape our terms of admission in especial view of an assumed class of such persons? Or, rather, again, it may be said to be, whether we ought to recast our tests in such a manner as to secure a greater certainty that we do not turn any true Christian away, even at an involved addition of risk of receiving to our membership, in increased numbers, two classes of persons,—the unconverted and the inconsistent.

In the matter of creed tests he was equally emphatic. It seemed to him entirely certain that Jesus on the night of the last supper would have refused the sacramental cup to Peter or John, or any of the others, if one of them had expressed a doubt as to the eternity of future punishment:

Or, again, suppose John to have risen there, and presented to the Saviour his scruples: "My beloved Lord, in the past I have believed in the righteousness and the certainty of the revealed judgment upon the impenitent. But since hearing more fully of your wonderful teachings concerning love, as the essential spirit of the Gospel, above all, since seeing it so divinely exemplified in your life, I cannot, suffer me to say it, I cannot believe that any soul will be finally lost. I know your teachings upon this terrible subject. I do not overlook that you have given so great and so explicit emphasis upon these teachings within the present week. But I cannot receive them. I cannot believe that there is to be a separation, forever, of the righteous and the wicked. This part of your teaching is too severe. May it not be relaxed?" Under these circumstances would the Saviour, is it conceivable, have put that memorial cup to the lips even of John—the cup of death and life? Or suppose Thomas to have declared a doubt, as cherished by him, of the divine authority of the words of Christ, and of the entire volume of Scripture. Or suppose Nathanael to have questioned whether a guileless life would not be a sufficient claim for salvation, expressing a doubt of the efficacy or the necessity of a sacrificial atonement for sin.

With respect to doctrine, his convictions were quite as strong. He believed our doctrinal tests to be Scriptural in

the sense that the customary creeds could be established by proofs deduced from Holy Scripture. He referred to the then recently published creed of 1883 in terms that implied a conviction that this document involved a dangerous letting down of the doctrinal standards of the denomination. Those of us who knew and honored Dr. Leavitt and who never esteemed him more highly than when he differed from us in judgment, can imagine with what fervor he uttered this protest against any abatement of stringent doctrinal tests as a condition of church membership:

Shall we let down the bars? This is the question, brethren, of the National Council. This was not the question in the early decades of this century, when our life was spiritually renewed and our great benevolent and missionary work was inaugurated in the beginnings of an imperial history. It was not a question at Boston in 1865; it was not a question at Oberlin in 1871, when President Finney laid his hands upon us in dying benediction. But this year this is one of the questions raised for us. Standing in this place of high survey, hearing the Saviour charging us, Lift up your eyes and look upon the field; seeing these vast cities, with their formidable problems; surveying this great continent lying east and west to the oceans; looking toward the millions of a South where the bars have been down for a hundred years, shall our word be, "Lower the bars?" Is this a part of the work which presses upon the conscience of this Council? Is this in the message for the hour? Have we then had such success in the process of revision of creeds? Has our latest attempt so promoted peace and spiritual power? Has it so manifestly obtained the favor of Heaven, that we are encouraged to go further on this line with our creeds, and even to reach beyond and lay hands upon our covenants also? Shall we lower the bars which for so many of us were not too high for our infant feet, nor for those of our children?—safeguards which, in times of sacred experience, moved by the Holy Spirit, we and our awakened churches have so plainly raised a little higher, though still not too high, for the feet of the children, or for the simplest of spiritual wayfarers. Shall we, under the clarified spiritual gaze of the men whose honored names here encircle us, let down the bars?

But whether it be called a lowering of the bars or not human creeds have their day and cease to be, and no man would have contended more strongly than Dr. Leavitt against the spiritual right of creeds to tyrannize over the souls of men, however earnestly he might have contended for a particular creed.

Even so staunch and noble a Puritan as Dr. Leavitt, who would have fought against any man's right to impose upon him a document like the Athenasian creed, was quite capable of fighting courteously but fearlessly against any attempt to "let down the bars" by substituting the Creed of 1883 for the Burial Hill Confession.

We are told in the epistle to the Hebrews that "that which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away," but this process is often a retarded one. The brazen serpent of Moses unto which men looked and were healed and which might have become to them a veritable symbol of the uplifted Christ became instead an object of superstitious reverence. It did not vanish away automatically. It called for somewhat heroic treatment on the part of Hezekiah who referred to it in terms of contempt and ground it to powder.

Now it is a pity that any really worthy creed should ever have had to be treated thus, but one need look only to the Anglican refusal to abolish the Athenasian Creed, to Presbyterian conservatism with respect to the Westminster standards, and to the repeated refusal of the Methodist General Conference to eliminate from its discipline certain admittedly obsolete portions, to realize how very difficult it may become to secure by formal vote a recognition of what may have come to be tacitly acknowledged by everybody that a particular creed adopted by a church many years ago is no longer the creed of the church.

As a general rule a creed becomes obsolete a long while before it is repealed. The earnest protest of two or three aged members will usually postpone until a decent interval succeeding their funerals an attempt to substitute a more modern creed for that which is upon the books of the church.

It is here that the perplexing question often rises, What is the duty of the church and the minister when the creed is manifestly outgrown, but there are sentimental or other

reasons which prevent an immediate change? The question is as perplexing in the administration of obsolete law as it is in the interpretation of obsolete creeds. With reference to laws, Hon. Newton D. Baker, Secretary of War, recently contributed a suggestive article to *The Atlantic Monthly*.

We Americans have got into the habit of saying of ourselves, or permitting others to say of us, that we are a law-breaking people. The fact is that we are probably the most law-abiding people in the world. We have an inexplicit and inexplicable method of repealing some of the laws we outgrow by simply ceasing to observe them; but, in the maintenance of order in society through the automatic self-control of the people, none but the simplest rural societies can compare with us.

These dead-letter laws, naturally enough, are in all stages of being dead. Those against witchcraft have been dead so long that even the sharpest eyes can find but the memory of them; those requiring men to tell the truth in personal-property tax returns, equally but not so anciently dead, can still be summoned, like Glendower's spirits and with like effect, from the vastly deep; and those of more recent repudiation have, here and there, a tardy friend who refuses to accept the current notion of their deadness and so calls them occasionally into fitful simulations of being alive. It is this last class that causes the trouble, and out of it arises one of the most embarrassing phases of the whole question of law-enforcement. Mayors, administrations, and police forces are more often and more successfully attacked from this point than any other, and the consequences, all too often, are corrupted policemen and shuffling executives who give the best excuse they can think of at the moment for failure to do the impossible, but succeed in adding nothing to the dispute but a sense of their own perplexity.

The argument ordinarily presented marches with a stately tread. "You have taken an oath to enforce all the laws," the chairman of the Law-Enforcement League will say; "here is a law you are not enforcing. You are not chosen to elect which laws are to be enforced, nor have you any means whatever of determining whether this law is approved by the general conscience. The best way to repeal a bad law is to enforce it." Now the logic of this is sound enough, but the history of our law from the earliest times shows that we Anglo-Saxons have preferred a wholly different way of making and unmaking our laws; and however desirable this perfectly logical way may be in itself, it just is not our way. We have chosen to let the acts and thoughts of individuals make whatever head they can until they become customs; and then some legislative body discovers them in full operation by common consent, and by enactment "crystalizes them into law." The process of unmaking is much the same. A custom is the aggregate of individual habits, and a new custom replaces an old one as an increasing number of individuals change their habits,—an imperceptible and teas-

ing process which leaves the inquirer as to the state of the law, at some moments in its course, sadly puzzled.

Even the Law-Enforcement Leagues plainly have some sense of this fact; their arguments, grounded on generalizations, always end in an instance. The sensational pulpit will rebuke the police department for its failure to enforce the law; a committee will wait upon the mayor and demand enforcement to the letter; but whether the committee be clerical or lay, and however broad the foundation laid upon the vice of disregard of law, the object finally appears to be to secure the enforcement of some particular law. It may be the midnight or Sunday closing of saloons, the prohibition of theatrical exhibitions on Sunday or prize fights on any day, or another spasmodic revival of the notion that merely putting a few women through the amercing processes of the police court will suppress vice; but when such a delegation is asked whether the lesson of respect for law will not be further impressed by stopping Sunday street-cars, suppressing the Sunday newspaper, holding up the milkman, and generally restoring by force the sabbath of the statutes, Wisdom triumphs over knowledge, and the reply invariably is that it would be better to take one thing at a time and especially the one thing then agitating that particular delegation. Often the order asked is given, with the result that the committee reports back in triumph, the league chooses a new subject to fret about, and the executive goes again through the discouraging and futile experience of trying to get officers, prosecutors, judges, and juries to do just what none of them will do,— namely, convict people of crime for doing things that are the community habit and practice. Clearly it would be better if all the law could be written and all that is written be law. Clearly it is a bungling system to leave this borderland between the live and the dead law to be explored by the discretion of individual officers, and to have these constant controversies as to the existence and location of the river of doubt; but we trail centuries of experience behind us in our preference for this way of doing things, and the alternatives are not free from difficulties of a formidable kind.

For one thing, it will never be easy for us to give up the internal elasticity of our system in exchange for a rigid regimentation of society in which our daily lives will run by rules. We have a sense of freedom in our institutions which seems almost to imply a consciousness that we made the rules to which we conform and are busy revising them, from day to day. Moreover, our democracies are too large to act with the speed of a town meeting; and we must, therefore, have some way of carrying things along until we are sure enough of the permanence of a new practice to justify putting so large a machine in motion to give it formal expression. We prefer to have mistakes made, now and then, by those whose business it is to enforce the laws, rather than to subject ourselves to a mechanical enforcement of arbitrary regulations which do not grow as we grow and do not ease up as we push the whole social weight against them.

The common-law jury system exemplifies the whole story. Originally the jury was a company of eye-witnesses gathered to-

gether to declare a fact by comparison of their own recollections as to its occurrence. Now it is a company of twelve human, habit-forming beings whose function is to prevent the letter of the law from killing the spirit of the community. The lawyers may read and the judges charge, but the jury will not convict unless justice is going to be done, and justice to them means the enforcement of the expectation of the community as to personal conduct. They enforce neither the law that has been nor the law that is to be, but the law that is; and when the police have made a lot of arrests and have produced flawless proof of guilt under the letter of the statute, only to have their trouble for their pains, with acquittal following each arrest, they quite naturally decide to devote their energies to other classes of cases; and that particular statute, for the time being at least, has suffered a democratic repeal.—Law, Police and Social Problems, by Hon. Newton D. Baker in *Atlantic Monthly*.

Many good people stand ready to take issue with Mr. Baker both as to law and to creeds. They take their stand on the affirmation of President Grant that the best way to secure the repeal of a bad law is to enforce it, and that the only thing to do with a creed so long as it remains unrevoked is to believe it unreservedly, preach it outspokenly, and insist upon its acceptance unflinchingly. But in actual practice it has been proved that the enforcement of a bad law is not commonly the cause of the repealing of the law, but rather the occasion of the defeat of a good administration at the next election.

It is interesting to note how Jesus dealt with the proposition of enforcing an obsolete statute. There was brought to Him a woman who had been taken in adultery, and the law said she should be stoned. That law had become obsolete through neglect, and in the time of Jesus the Jews had no authority to enforce a capital sentence. The men who brought this poor woman to Jesus had as fine an opportunity as such men could ever wish to learn whether Jesus would favor the enforcement of an obsolete law even at the cost of bringing down upon himself the wrath of the Roman government. What Jesus did was something more than to evade the issue. Jesus probably believed that the law was a good one in the time of Moses, but that it was unwise to enforce it in His own day. In any event He did not direct that it should be enforced.

Creeds are often abolished by the method of repeal which Jesus recognized with respect to this Mosaic statute, even though they remain in their original place and form in the church Constitution; even though people subscribe to them and recite them, they are already repealed.

The adoption of a creed is generally a proclamation that it is already virtually obsolete. No creed can be adopted until the thinkers of a denomination have been overtaken by a great body of their slowly moving followers. If the really creative minds of a generation were at liberty to make and adopt its creeds, they would formulate documents in terms unintelligible to the great body of those for whose use they were intended. But by the time a sufficient number of the advance guards of thought have gone to the stake for their convictions, two things are likely to have happened. The leaders will have grown a little more prudent, and the multitude will have advanced somewhat beyond their former stupidity and hostility to the truth, so it will have become possible to make a creed acceptable to a sufficient body of both conservatives and progressives to permit of the creed's adoption. But the very fact that the creed is now adopted is a virtual admission that it no longer expresses adequately the thought of the leaders. The business of creed-making is a perpetual building of the tombs of the prophets, whom our fathers slew, and is a warning to us to have a care lest our own merry executions include in them now and then a prophet.

An ancient creed is a palimpsest. The original words are there, written by some venerable hand that long since returned to dust, but between the lines of the same parchment are written the declarations of men's living faith. As the Jews placed the vowel points of the human title "Lord" beneath the four consonants which spelled the holy name Jehovah, and recited it "Lord" until they forgot and never relearned the original pronunciation, so creeds retain the consonants of the original writers and the vowels of the modern interpreters.

Nor are these necessarily at fundamental variance. The modern thinker, who, if he were at liberty to do so, might choose to express his faith in quite other terms, but who is required either by ecclesiastical authority or the exigencies of Christian co-operation to recite an ancient formulary, may be able, and some such men undeniably are able, to put the new wine of their living faith into the old bottles of the ancient creed.

And yet, there is a more excellent way, which is to face frankly the fact that the creed is a temporary instrument, and that it ought to be frequently revised, and after no great interval replaced, by one that embodies the truth of the Gospel in the speech of living men.

## V. A TESTIMONY, NOT A TEST

The author of this volume has been credited with the authorship of the affirmation that in Congregationalism, creeds are a testimony, and not a test; and he has been informed that the distinction is an impossible one. The distinction is entirely valid, and neither the words nor the principle of this distinction are original with this author. This statement came into common currency in connection with the discussions concerning the Creed of 1883, and it was distinctly in accord with our historic attitude toward confessions of faith.

But that was not the origin of this happy and truthful phrase. It was quoted with approval, in the *Congregational Quarterly* in 1862, from a sermon by Prof. Daniel T. Smith, before the Maine Missionary Society, in 1856, in which he protested against what had come to be the prevailing custom of requiring "as a necessary qualification for admission, an assent to creeds and covenants so framed as to place obstacles in the way of receiving many whose Christian character is unhesitatingly acknowledged," and declaring that according both to the New Testament standards and the history of Congregationalism, "the creed of a church is to be looked upon not so much in the light of a test as of testimony; and that its true use consists not in its furnishing a standard by which to estimate in all cases the character of one who claims to be a follower of Christ, but in its being a means of maintaining in the world those views which it is believed that Scripture was designed to teach, in distinction from the errors which its language may be perverted to support.' '

Whether this felicitous phrase originated with Professor Smith, the present writer does not know: but that he stated the

historic position of Congregationalism, there is abundant testimony.

The Preface to the Savoy Confession says: "Confessions, when made by a company of professors of Christianity, jointly meeting to that end, . . . the most genuine and natural use of such is, that, under the form of words, they express the substance of the same common salvation. . . . And, accordingly, such a transaction is to be looked upon but as a meet or fit medium whereby to express that their common faith and salvation, and in *no way* to be made use of as an imposition upon any. Whatever is of force or constraint, in matters of this nature, causeth them to *degenerate from the name and nature of confessions, and turns them from being confessions of faith into impositions and exactions of faith*; . . . there being nothing that tends more to heighten dissensions among brethren than to determine and adopt the matter of their difference under so high a title as to be an article of our faith." Upham maintained that churches "have a right to say on what conditions others, either individuals or bodies of men, shall share their fellowship;" saying, "They can enter into fellowship with others with whose principles they more nearly agree."—Rat. Dis. 57. But Cummings answered, "This reasoning seems to hold only on the supposition that churches are strictly voluntary, in distinction from divinely instituted, bodies. If churches are of divine institution, then all true Christians have a right to share in them all the privileges of the sons of God. It is their Father's table and their Father's Church; and what right have their brethren to debar them?"

Richard Mather says: "They may have a platform by way of profession of their faith, but not a binding rule of faith and practice. . . . If so, then they ensnare men attending more to the form of doctrine delivered from the authority of the church. . . . than to the examining thereof according to the Scriptures" (Church Covenant, 64). Burton, in his Rejoinder to Prynne's Reply to his Answer to Twelve Considerable

Questions, says: "It is the greatest possible tyranny over men's souls to make other men's judgments the rule of my conscience." (p. 19). Thomas Goodwin, in his letter to John Goodwin, is equally explicit on this point: so is Hubbard, in his *History of Massachusetts*. John Cotton, in his *Answer to Ball*, says: "When a church is suspected and slandered with corrupt and unsound doctrine, they have a call from God to set forth a public confession of their faith; but to prescribe the same as the confession of faith of that church to their posterity, or the prescribed confession of faith of one church to be a form and pattern unto others, sad experience has showed what a snare it has been to both." Even Herle, in his controversy with Mather and Tompson, disclaims "such a fan to purge the religious floor with, and setting the sun by the dial." The *Apologetical Narrative of the Independents in the Westminster Assembly* asserts that their rules of admission were such "as would take in any member of Christ. We took measure of no man's holiness by his opinions, whether concurring with us or adverse from us." Baillie, in his *Letters to Spang*, says: "Thomas Goodwin, at that meeting, declared that he cannot refuse to be members, nor censure when members, any for Anabaptism, Lutheranism, or any errors which are not fundamental and maintained against knowledge." The same principles are advanced by Cotton, in his *Holiness of Church Members*; and in the preface to the *Savoy Confession*. John Owen says: "We will never deny the communion to any person whose duty it is to desire it." Samuel Mather shows that all Christians ought to be admitted to any of Christ's churches. Cotton Mather says: "The churches of New England make only vital piety the terms of communion among them; and they all, with delight, see godly Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Anti-pedobaptists, and Lutherans, all members of the same churches, and sitting together without offence in the same holy mountain, at the same holy table." Speaking of the use then made of creeds, he

says of candidates for admission: "To the relation of his religious experience is added either a confession of faith of the person's own composing, or a briefer intimation of what publicly-received confession he chooses to adhere to." He says: "It is the design of these churches to make the terms of communion run as parallel as may be with the terms of salvation. A charitable consideration of nothing but true piety, in admitting to evangelical privileges, is a glory which the churches of New England would lay claim to." Dr. Watts, in his *Terms of Christian Communion*, shows that the churches may not appoint new rules of admission; as a general rule should admit all who make a credible profession of religion; exclude no sheep of the fold, and admit no unclean beast; take heed not to make the door of admission larger or straiter than Christ made it; and that nothing be in their covenant but what is essential to common Christianity. He has a list of substantial articles, all very fundamental, save that of the mode and subjects of baptism, which he argues (whether consistently or no) is fundamental to the peace of the church. And he shows that the Christian church flourished more than a hundred years without any set creeds, and argues their utter insufficiency, because they often have the assent neither of the head nor the heart. So late as 1801, Dr. Worcester's church in Fitchburg say, in defence of their creed, if the candidate dissented from any article, and it did not appear to result from enmity to the truth, he was admitted; "for it was never designed to exclude any from communion who appear to be real subjects of experimental religion." Thomas Goodwin shows that we are to bear with Christians for the sake of Christ that is in them, and therefore tolerate them as Christians, but contend earnestly for the faith. Dr. Kippis, in his *Vindication of Dissenting Ministers*, says: "We dissent because we deny the right of any body of men, whether civil or ecclesiastical, to impose human creeds, tests, or articles; and because we think it our duty not to submit to any such imposi-

tion, but to protest against it as a violation of our essential liberty to judge and act for ourselves in matters of religion." He adds: "They will not subscribe to human forms, which themselves believe, when such formularies are pressed upon them by an incompetent and usurped authority." He shows that ministers, believers in the doctrine of the Trinity, voted that no human composition or interpretation of that doctrine should be made a part of the Articles of Advice in 1719. Plymouth Church covenanted "to walk in a church state, in all God's ways made known or to be made known to them. They reserved an entire perpetual liberty of searching the inspired records, and forming both their principles and practices from those discoveries they should make therein, without imposing them on others. Milford Church, Conn., founded in 1640, had a covenant; but no mention is made of any confession of faith. The original covenant of the First Church in Boston, after the preamble, is simply this: "Do solemnly and deliberately, as in Christ's holy presence, bind ourselves to walk, in all our ways, according to the rule of the gospel, in all sincere conformity to his holy ordinances, and in mutual love and respect to each other, so far as God shall give us grace." Every member wrote his own confession in his own way, and to the satisfaction of those who received him into their fellowship. At first the churches of New England were usually constituted with no other form than a covenant. The author of *Seasonable Thoughts on Creeds and Articles of Faith as Religious Tests*, asks: "Do not the framers and advocates of creeds, as tests of orthodoxy and Christian communion, seem to confess that they are not satisfied with the Bible on this subject? . . . If creeds are necessary to guard against heretics, the Bible is not a sufficient rule. . . . Do they operate, have they operated, or are they likely ever to operate, as an effectual preventive to unprincipled and heretical men gaining admission into a Christian church?" Dr. Eckley shows that if creeds could be made perfect, then nothing would be necessary but to learn the

creed. Foxcroft, in his Century Sermon, says: "The Congregationalists were for having the rule of Christianity be the rule of conformity." Morton, in his New England Memorial, says: "Higginson's Confession of Faith and Covenant was acknowledged only as a direction pointing to that faith and covenant contained in the Holy Scriptures; and therefore no man was confined to that form of words, but only to the substance and scope of the matter contained therein; and, for the circumstantial manner of joining the church, it was ordered according to the wisdom and faithfulness of the elders, together with the liberty and ability of any person. Hence it was that some were admitted by expressing their consent to that written confession of faith and covenant; others did answer questions about the principles of religion, that were publicly propounded to them; some did present their confession in writing, which was read for them; and some, that were able and willing, did make their own confession, in their own words and way." Letchford, in his Plain Dealing, shows very minutely that profession of faith was made either by question and answer or else by solemn speech, as to the sum and tenor of the Christian faith laid down in the Scriptures, the officers in the church, and their duties. Such is the evidence of one who complained of their too great strictness, because they required evidence of experimental religion. He spoke that which he knew, and testified that he had seen. "Such testimonies," says Cummings, from whose painstaking collections the foregoing are selected, "ought to set for ever at rest the notion that Higginson's Confession of Faith was used as a constitution of the church and a test of admission." John Corbett says: "We need no human addition to sacred things, nor any mutable circumstances to be terms of fellowship." Cotton Mather, in his Letter to Lord Barrington, says: "No church on earth so notably makes the terms of communion run parallel with the terms of salvation. The only declared basis of union among them is that vital piety in which all good men, of differ-

ent names, are united." Robinson reminds the Plymouth immigrants, on parting, that it is an article of their church covenant "to be ready to receive whatever of truth shall be made known to them from the written word of God." The Rev. C. Upham shows that it is a fundamental principle of Congregationalism not to impose a test, which may not be complied with by all sincere Christians. In a similar manner argue Dr. West (Anniversary Plymouth Sermon, 58, 59), President Stiles (Convention Sermon, 45), John Howe (Works, 459, 931), and Mauduit (Case of Dissenting Ministers, 34, 35). "It was not the use of creeds, but making them separate acknowledged Christians, which our fathers condemned," says Cummings. "Their confessions were orthodox explicit manifestoes, not tests of admission. Some churches at this day have similar creeds, but require assent only to the substance of them; while others, making tests of their creeds, have frittered them down to the standard of those weakest in the faith. Few churches have too high a standard of admission, but it should consist only in true faith and vital godliness." Mitchell says: "Congregationalists object to creeds being used as tests, or set up as standards to enforce uniformity. . . . As articles of peace and bonds of union, we fear they create divisions as often as they prevent them;" and, speaking of some "who think that heaven and earth should pass, rather than one jot or tittle of the exact wording of the prescribed creed . . . be not fulfilled," he says: "Any brother that offends in one point they hold to be guilty of all, and obnoxious to ecclesiastical censure. They put their strait-jacket upon the limbs of Charity, who loves freedom as she loves truth, and make their narrow views the jail-limits, within which she walks afflicted and confined.' "

The election of Henry Ware as Hollis Professor of Divinity in Harvard in 1805 led to a violent controversy with a demand for a tightening of creed conditions. The protest against Prof. Ware's election, because of his known advanced

views, was sounded by Professor Pearson, a member of the corporation, and espoused by Dr. Jedediah Morse of Charlestown, in a pamphlet of "True Reasons." The Corporation replied to his demand that Prof. Ware undergo examination as to his orthodoxy,—

"That this attempt to introduce a categorical examination into the creed of a candidate was a barbarous relic of inquisitorial power, alien alike from the genius of our government, and the spirit of our people."

Quotations like the foregoing could be multiplied, and the only reason that the already large number of declarations on this point is not many times larger is that this principle was undisputed in early Congregationalism. In an able article in the Congregational Quarterly in 1869, Dr. A. H. Quint thus summarized the usage of our denomination:

1. Doctrinal beliefs are not the life itself. That life is love. "He that loveth is born of God." But nothing is easier, as history abundantly proves, than to mistake orthodoxy for faith. It is a question whether the custom of our churches in baptizing candidates immediately after their profession of doctrinal orthodoxy, instead of after the covenant of faith, does not lie in the direction of this mistake. The Articles of Faith, assent to which is required of candidates, are not a confession of faith in Christ. Many unconverted persons "believe" them all. The "covenant" is the proper avouchment of faith in Christ. But baptism after the creed, as though it were the sign and seal of orthodoxy, instead of after the covenant, as the sign and seal of faith (see Shorter Catechism, 94, 95), tends to obscure the distinction between orthodoxy and faith. (See report of a committee on this subject in the Minutes of the General Association of Massachusetts, 1867.) The brutal violence of the "Robber Council" at Ephesus, assembled in 449 to decide the question of Christ's nature, or natures; the fierceness with which theologians have fought over the words of redeeming love, "This is my body, given for you," attest how easy it is to cover total lack of the spirit with a cloak of zeal for the letter. Indeed, it is not easy to think kindly of those whose religious belief we detest. Nor is the odium theologium as yet a fossil curiosity, even among "liberal" Christians. "Without charity I am nothing." "If any man love God, the same is known of him."

2. The life only can keep, assimilate, work up the doctrine. Doctrine without life is food in the stomach of a corpse, sure to corrupt. Let the religion of a creed die out, and its theology will change. Thus rose the Socinian apostasy in Massachusetts, as has been thoroughly demonstrated. (Clark's History of the Congrega-

tional Churches of Massachusetts.) When we see the clergy of the Anglican Church subscribing to her Thirty-nine Articles, and exhibiting every phase of belief from orthodoxy to rationalism, from high Protestantism to high Ritualism, we learn just how much reliance can be placed on doctrinal tests for securing consistency and purity of faith. Better the apostolic way,—visiting the widows and fatherless in their affliction. Charity which “never faileth” (Gal. v. 4; 2 Pet. iii. 17) keeps “unspotted from the world” better than any subscription. “Knowledge putteth up, but charity buildeth up.” Yet we would keep the doctrinal test also, but in its proper place and use.

3. Disparagement of precision in doctrine betokens a low or unhealthy state of the life. Be the creed kept free from antiquated phraseology like a tree from dead wood; reformulated from time to time, as the Christian consciousness attains to clearer thought and more exact expressions; and let it be kept also in its legitimate use, so as to disfranchise no true believer, and it argues a lack of iron in the blood to be impatient of hearing it read, willing to let truth be ambiguously and vaguely held, unfriendly to creeds in general. A little persecution would be good for such good people. If they lived in a martyr period, they would soon define precisely what they did and what they did not believe. And those of them that loved the truth well enough to die for it would want to state that costly truth so truly that no unbeliever could profess it without falsehood. The martyr church did that in making the Creed of Nicæa such that no Arian could honestly subscribe it. That distinguished New England orator who some time since disparaged the Declaration of Independence as a “string of glittering generalities,” had he lived on into the sacrifices of the civil war, would doubtless have recanted what he said in the degenerate period preceding it. And those “liberal” Christians who are so hard upon Creeds, were they martyred a little, would learn—that is, those that could abide the lesson—the preciousness of the truth which the heroes of the faith have bequeathed as a blood-bought inheritance to their posterity.

4. Imperfection in doctrinal belief should debar no true Christian from church-fellowship. To exclude a child from school for ignorance, to look for the fruit as soon as the root, is preposterous. Where “the power of godliness” is, there “the form” will come under favoring circumstances in time, as the skeleton develops and hardens into proper symmetry with the lapse of childhood into manhood. Not the least of the “plagues”—mischiefs—that come upon those who add to the things written in the book is the discouragement of the children from coming early into the church. Assent to a creed is valueless, if made on the authority of another mind; and yet it is beyond the ability of most children to assent, understandingly, to the theological creeds of some of our churches. And the closer our observance, with all sorts of persons, of the apostolic terms of church fellowship, the better for the church and the doctrine. Every regenerate person has a Divine right to church fellowship. “Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity,”—if grace, then, by orderly approach, the means of grace. Cotton Mather

says: "The churches of New England make only vital piety the terms of communion among them." (Rat. Dis. Introd.) John Owen says: "We will never deny the communion to any person whose duty it is to desire it." (Puritans and their Principles, 295.) Samuel Mather shows that all Christians ought to be admitted to any of Christ's churches. (Apology, 34, and elsewhere.) Dr. Watts, in his "Terms of Christian Communion," shows that the churches should, as a general rule, admit all who make a credible profession of religion, take heed not to make the door of admission larger or straiter than Christ made it, and that nothing be in their covenant but what is essential to common Christianity. The principle of assimilation, every man "to his own place," together with the strict maintenance of orthodoxy and piety in the pulpit, will be found as potent to produce all desirable uniformity of belief as any initiatory tests in mere theology. We say, then, in the golden words of Cotton Mather, let "the terms of communion run parallel with the terms of salvation."

Dr. George M. Boynton said on this subject:

That which constitutes a Congregational church is its covenant, in which its members, on the basis of common convictions as to truth and duty, and some unanimity of thought and purpose as to the best way of expressing that truth and discharging the duty, agree on certain modes of action.

It is customary for a Congregational church to adopt a creed, as an expression of the beliefs in which its members agree and as the basis of their common life. They may adopt some form of sound words prepared by others, or they may phrase a creed for themselves. There is no Congregational creed prepared or adopted by a general council which all churches in the fellowship must adopt. In the early days that generally assented to was the Westminster Confession as modified in the Savoy Confession (1658, adopted at Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1680) containing what seemed to be a comprehensive and fitting expression of their faith. Few Congregational churches, if any, retain that ancient symbol, and fewer still would be willing to adopt it now. It is properly regarded as an ancient battle-flag, under which, in their day, the fathers lived and fought valiantly, and which the sons should reverently place among the trophies of the past. It is the flag to which we should most of us have rallied in its time. It does not represent the issues of today. (George M. Boynton, "The Congregational Way," pp. 52, 3.)

The practice of the English Congregational churches is in full accord with our own in the matter of receiving all Christians into fellowship. On this point Dr. Dale, says, giving reasons why all Christians should be members of the Church, and why no Christian should be excluded, says,—

(I.) Christ founded the Church for all that believe in Him. There is nothing in the account of the Church contained in the New Testament, there is nothing in the nature of the Church itself, to suggest that Christ required any other qualification for membership than faith in Himself. The Church is His society, not ours. It is a society for His brethren—for all His brethren; for His friends—for all His friends. To impose conditions of church membership that exclude any of those who are the brethren and friends of Christ is to defeat the purpose for which He founded the Church.

(II.) Christ has made it the duty of all that believe in Him to enter the Church. By refusing to receive any of those who believe in Christ, a church prevents them from fulfilling an obligation which Christ has imposed upon them.

(III.) The blessings conferred by the church fellowship are meant for all that believe in Christ. If men are the friends of Christ, we do them a cruel wrong by refusing them a place as guests at His table. If they are the brethren of Christ, we inflict a grave injury on their spiritual life by refusing to receive them with brotherly affection and confidence. As the Gospel of Christ is intended for men of all races and all lands, and cannot be deliberately withheld from any man without guilt, the strength, the safety, the blessedness, and whatever other blessings come from membership of the Church are intended for all that have received the Gospel.

The polity of every church has its roots in its theology, in its conceptions of the relations between God and man, and of the nature of the Christian redemption. Congregationalism, in affirming that only those who have personal faith in Christ should be members of the Church of Christ, asserts in its polity the unique and infinite importance which is attributed to personal faith by the whole contents of the Christian Revelation. But, if any other qualification for church membership is demanded, the force of this testimony to the unique and infinite importance of personal faith in Christ is broken. Faith in Christ is the only condition of the remission of sins and of eternal salvation; this great truth is obscured if a church insists on anything besides faith in Christ as a condition of church membership.—Dales Manual of Congregational Principles, pp. 49-50.

Dr. A. Hastings Ross has been quoted as favoring creed tests for admission of members and ministers. What he held was that, "The church creed should be read at communion seasons, but members should be admitted on their assent to a simpler form." His words on this subject may be given in full:

"Every member on joining the church publicly assents to a creed; and every pastor in accepting the call to any church makes its creed a part of his covenant and contract with the said church, which he can not honorably break by preaching

another doctrine. Every church and minister on joining an association either expressly or impliedly assents to a creed and covenant, both of the district body and of the state and national bodies. In this way any doctrinal unsoundness in church or minister is likely to be detected. There is no slighting of creeds. Our general confessions, it is true, are mere declarations, to which no formal assent is required; for assent to church creeds, associational bases, and inquiry by committee or council are sufficient to secure soundness in the faith. The Congregational churches of England are less rigid than those in America in this regard of doctrinal tests.

“The creedal tests of admission to church membership should not, however, go beyond the Scriptural requirement of “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20: 21). Whom the Lord receives in regeneration his churches are to receive (Rom. 14: 1-5). The creed and covenant for admission should be constructed on this principle; and hence no elaborate articles of faith or rigid examination should stand as tests of admission. There should be, therefore, a form of admission to membership separate from the creed of the church, and much more simple, that children and the weakest believer may enter the nurturing home of the saints and be trained in the church up to the doctrinal perfection of its creed. The church creed should be read at communion seasons, but members should be admitted on their assent to a simpler form. This position was taken in the Ohio Manual in 1874, and in the creed and confession of faith prepared by the commission of the National Council, and issued in 1883. Our churches, in placing an elaborate creed as the condition of church membership, depart from their principles and early practice.”—The Church-Kingdom, pp. 347, 8.

## VI. A SYMPOSIUM ON CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Congregational church law is essentially a law of usage. No one man and no one group of men determines what is and what is not good regular Congregationalism. In order that this work may represent as thoroughly as possible not only the views and experiences of its author, but also the opinions and practices of our churches and ministers generally, I have asked ministers of our leading churches in different parts of the country to contribute to a symposium concerning creeds and church membership. These ministers were asked to state in their own language either the custom of their respective churches with reference to creed subscription, or their own judgment of the place, if any, which it ought to occupy in receiving members into a Congregational church. In particular they were asked to say whether in their judgment and in the practice of their several churches, a local church should consider itself at liberty to refuse membership to any Christian man even if he could not conscientiously accept its confession of faith. I give herewith the answers, as I have received them.

### CREEDS VITAL TO FAITH

A creed is the reasoned and rational explication of the Christian faith and experience of an individual or a church. I cannot conceive of either a creedless individual or a creedless church, unless it be one which is either unthinking or irrational. The more vital the faith, the more comprehensive and profound the experience, the more long and strong will be the creed, provided always the man does not cease to think.

If he thinks, and if his Christian faith and life be ever growing, he must explicate the results of that faith and experience in such fashion as not to stultify his reason.

The early church made a distinction, a very valid and helpful distinction, between a *confession* of faith and a *rule* of faith. The latter is what is commonly called a creed, as the great creeds of the Christian ages, or as most of the creeds in use in our individual Congregational churches. They have been such creeds as have been defined above. They have changed from generation to generation, from body to body, as indeed they must if they are to be the utterance of a living faith and experience. Each individual Christian will have its own. Each individual church will have its own. In the case of the church it should be framed to represent the beliefs of the church as a whole, so that any member of the church when asked what his church believes could point at once to the creed of the church, adopted by the church, modified from time to time, if need be, by the church, on the whole believed in by the church as a whole. As for the name for such a church creed I prefer the title a standard, rather than a rule, of faith. A rule most commonly signifies that up to which a thing or person must come or be rejected; a standard most commonly signifies that towards which a person strives, though suffering no ill results if he never attains it. As a practical pastor I did not rest easy till my church had such a standard. Should I return to the pastorate, I should not rest content till the church under my leadership had such a standard. It would be a part of my duty to attempt to lead them to see its rationality and reasonableness. It, however, should be no part of my duty to turn it into a rule of faith, to compel every member of the church to accept it or else to leave the church; or to require its acceptance by any person, whatever his age, intellectual ability or Christian experience, before being admitted to the church. This last least of all.

For this last, i.e., for admission to the church, there is the confession of faith. What should that contain? The least possible and account the confessor a real Christian. In both churches which I served I found on my arrival a creed of fourteen articles, a creed that was not simply a standard, but a rule of faith, a fourteen-barred gate required of every-one, a man or child, wise or simple, learned or unlearned, on uniting with the church. In case of my second and last church, I led, and my church readily followed, in the adoption of the Creed of 1883 as a standard of faith, and of the Apostles' Creed as a confession of faith. As regards the latter I would have gone further; we went as far probably as was wise under the conditions then existing. My minimum and my maximum for a confession of faith for entrance to the church is found in Acts 20: 21: "Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ."

I cannot conceive of a person being a Christian who is not repentant toward God, or who does not believe in Jesus as Christ, i.e., Saviour, and Lord, or Master of his life. Any person who can accept those two, three if you please, conditions, I cannot shut out of Christ's church. As pastor, I tried, and should try, to have every person who sought to unite with the church thoroughly understand those conditions, honestly accept them and loyally live up to them.

This for entrance to the church. Then begins the second great duty of the pastor to the new member, so to teach him and lead him that the simple faith and living experience represented by those few conditions shall grow steadily from more to more of faith, of experience, and also of rational explication of that faith and experience, into creed. Of this process there is no end save the fulness of the Godhead bodily in Jesus Christ, and the endless ages of eternity.

I take a covenant for granted, since the covenant is a *sine qua non* of a Congregational church. The content of the

covenant is quite other than that of the confession of faith or, still more, of the standard of faith.

CALVIN M. CLARK, D. D.

Professor of Ecclesiastical History in Bangor Theological Seminary.

#### HONEST CONFESSION OF CHRIST

The only condition of membership in Plymouth church is an honest confession of Jesus Christ as Redeemer and Lord and a sincere purpose to follow and obey Him. The church does not require subscription to a creed nor does it impose a set of rules upon its members. It places each member on his honor before God. "To his own Master he standeth or falleth." Church membership is not an assumption of perfection; it is a confession of need. The church is the school of Christ in which all are undergraduates. "One is your teacher and all ye are brethren."

REV. NOBLE D. ELDERKIN.

Formerly of Plymouth Church, Lawrence, Kansas.

#### RECEIVE ALL CHRISTIANS

I would not personally exclude any from church membership, and I am sure any church would not, who did not accept our creed in all its details. I am sure that if any one should present a statement of belief of his own, that at heart had loyalty and devotion to Jesus he would be accepted. We have had several such cases, and these persons have become devoted and loyal Christians and church members. Most of the people who come into our Congregational churches have not had the training essential for theological discriminations, and creeds have little meaning (I find) or value to them. Thus the following pledge given and received by the First Congregational Church of Denver, Colorado is sufficient, and

more impressive than the reading of doctrinal articles, every phase of which has come out of discussion and controversy and has meaning only to the scholar.

Our basis of church membership is this: We promise to cooperate with the members of this church in the study and practice of that law which Christ taught as supreme: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself."

The question of creeds is becoming less vital. There are mysteries of life we cannot fathom. There are forces that we constantly use we cannot define. Christianity is one of these. The mystery of Christ's person cannot be sounded, but the power of his life is a felt and measured fact. To-day we approach Christianity not simply as a message to the intelligence, but as a moral and spiritual force that has infinite life building power. Our attitude is not that of the theologian whose function it is to reason and explain; rather that of the builder, who may be interested in the geological history of the stone he uses, but who selects it because with it he can erect his building. Thus the chief value and approach to Christ is not through the mystery of his person, but thro his working power in life. Thus we are to-day approaching a Christian truth from its operative, rather than its dogmatic or speculative side.

If you can get anything out of this you are lucky. In any case best wishes for you in all your thought and deeds.

REV. ANDREW OGILVIE.

First Church, Elkhart, Indiana.

#### DEPENDS ON WHICH ARTICLE HE REJECTS

Our members assent to both the creed and the covenant, but before reading the creed I make a statement that, while we emphasize one's life, character and purpose, we also hold certain fundamental beliefs which have been continuous in

the church's history. I have drawn up what I believe to be a minimum creed. One may believe much more than I have stated; he is not likely to believe less and be a Christian. Christians all believe in God, Christ and the Spirit. But they do not agree as to how these are related, each to the other. Personally I believe that God and the Spirit are the same, and that Christ is our best revelation of God. But if the more orthodox wish to make another combination and a different interpretation, they may do so. Some will say, Why use the terms God and Spirit if they are the same? My answer would be, for convenience, variety of expression, and to describe two different aspects or functions of the divine person. A minimum creed so worded that each may find the essentials and each be free to combine and interpret its elements as he will—this is the ideal! Whether we should admit a member who dissents from the creed would all depend on which article of the creed he refused to accept. If he refused to say that he believed in God, I guess we would keep him on probation, wouldn't we? But if he said that he did not like my statement that the church is a divinely appointed institution, I would say that I do not like it altogether myself, and I would let him enter the fold.

REV. ROBERT E. BROWN.

Second Church, Waterbury, Conn.

#### ASSENT TO CREED NOT REQUIRED

Our members assent to the covenant, but we read the creed of the Council, and the great majority of the members assent to it. We have received into the church occasionally a person who could not assent to every statement of a creed. We require full assent to our covenant. If a Congregational church has a creed which it has adopted, I do not see how it can consistently fail to try to live up to it, and require it of its members. We do not require assent to the creed for admission.

REV. CHARLES M. SHELDON, D. D.,

Pastor Central Congregational Church, Topeka, Kan.

## ADMIT ALL CHRISTIANS

The members of our church do not assent to anything, as is distinctly stated on the third page of the covenant. We have no creed except that we have given a general assent to the Kansas City creed, and I think it probably comes closer than any other to expressing the average sentiment among our people.

My own judgment is that the Congregational church should admit to its membership those who are Christian in spirit and character, without any reference to Creed subscription. A pastor should certainly not be required to accommodate his teachings to the creed of his local church. Indeed how can he be entitled to the name of the honest man if he is willing to do so.

REV. CARL S. PATTON, D. D.,

First Church, Columbus, Ohio.

## CREED ASSENT LEADS TO EQUIVOCATION

It was a dark day for religion when assent to a creed was first made a condition of church membership. Creeds are the products of theological disputes and are framed to exclude the outvoted party. No creed deals with the things that Jesus was most interested in. No creed says, "I believe in practicing the golden rule," or "I believe that only the childlike enter the kingdom." Creed subscription creates no difficulty for the thoughtless or the insincere. They readily assent to anything. But the thoughtful and the scrupulous are troubled and kept out of the Church. Thus the creed requirement operates to lower the average intelligence and sincerity of the membership.

When a young man, shaking off the temptations of the world, decides to confess Christ before men, he meets a painful shock when he finds that he cannot enter the church with-

out assenting to a creed. Many have come into my study in distress over this matter. I say to them, The Church is the great institution for continuing the work of Jesus on earth. You cannot do without the Church and the Church cannot do without you. By a most unfortunate mistake our forebearers put up a creed on the church door. The people who are in now do not clearly understand it, and do not heartily believe all it seems to say, but they suppose that it belongs at the door. In fact they think very little about it. You will have to assent to it in some vague and general way and after you are in nobody will be likely to refer to it again.

This is not pleasant advice to give or to take; it has a Jesuitical sound. But what else can you say?

Prof. W. G. Ballantine.

Springfield, Mass.

#### THE CHURCH A SCHOOL

A creed is an achievement. Before one can say, "I believe," one must have learned. The historic creeds mark the attainment of the past, and indicate an end the present and the future are to strive to reach—or to surpass.

The church is a school, inviting and inciting souls and minds to effort, and directing their way. Its true requirement must be the purpose and the effort which shall achieve. The only proper test of membership, or of ministry, is this: Do you set your eyes towards the heights men have achieved and seek to gain or to surpass those heights?

REV. LESLIE W. SPRAGUE.

Sioux Falls, S. D.

#### TO KNOW AND DO GOD'S WILL

In the First Church of Pasadena members assent to Covenant. We have adopted and read at the morning service the

Kansas City National Council Creed. We do not insist on formal assent to the creed. We want and only require a sincere desire to know and do the will of God.

REV. D. F. FOX, D. D.

First Church Pasadena, Cal.

#### BACK TO CHRIST'S WAY

The First Church of Denver leaves its members free to make their own speculative creeds. The members assent only to the covenant. No church has any right to refuse membership because of a difference of speculative opinion. Christianity is a matter of purpose rather than of opinion. The loss of practical emphasis on life, is a greater tragedy even than the loss of intellectual liberty. The resultant confusion is one of the main causes of present religious impotence. Of course Christ's example is absolutely at variance with the prevailing custom of the church. I wish our Congregational churches would come back to Christ's way.

REV. ALLAN A. TANNER.

Denver, Colorado.

#### HAS DROPPED THE APOSTLES' CREED

The Central Congregational Church of Boston has recently dropped the Apostles' Creed from the books of the church and has replaced it in the service for the reception of members by a Biblical confession of faith which we use regularly every Sunday morning. I am of the opinion that there should be room for wide latitude of opinion in the individual interpretation of church creeds and even liberty of dissent in the matter of details.

REV. W. L. SPERRY.

Boston, Mass.

#### MENTAL RESERVATIONS ARE ALLOWABLE

We omit the creed. Emphasis is placed on the covenant relation and fellowship. Creedal and doctrinal matters are left

to the individual conscience. I cannot see how any church calling itself Christian can deny membership to one who really is a Christian. Christ did not ask His disciples to assent to a creed. He did not propose one when He said, "Go ye into all the world and preach." The individual is all important, not a statement of faith. The latter is at best man-made, partial and incomplete. Creeds are attempts to strike an average, to express the collective rather than an individual belief. No church can find or make a creed which will be all inclusive and universal. Allowance must always be made for mental reservations and private interpretation. The great historical creeds were polemical. They were formulated in defense of certain doctrines not always supported by Biblical truth as we know it to-day. They embody truth as seen by individuals of a long ago time. Nevertheless, these creeds are noble, useful and impressive helps to liturgical and formal worship.

REV. MALCOLM DANA.

Ottumwa, Iowa.

#### CREED TESTS DISLOYAL TO PURITANS

A creed is useful in expressing what a church does believe, not in declaring what its members must believe. Every one whose ruling purpose is to do the will of God is eligible to fellowship in any Christian church. To deny this is to disbelieve that God will teach His children who come to Him for knowledge of His will and for the guidance of His Spirit to do it.

A Congregational church which refuses to admit to its fellowship any one who is trying to live the life of Christ among men is untrue to the faith of our fathers who founded our body of churches in the spirit of freedom, and counted no cost too great to set forth before mankind the fellowship in Christ of those who sought to realize the liberty of the glory of the children of God. They, "as the Lord's free people,

joined themselves in a covenant of the Lord into a church estate, in the fellowship of the Gospel, to walk in all His ways, made known, or to be made known unto them, according to their best endeavors, whatever it should cost them, the Lord assisting them." Such a covenant should be strong enough to hold in union all those "whose hearts the Lord had touched with heavenly zeal for His truth."

REV. A. E. DUNNING, D. D.,  
Former Editor of *The Congregationalist*.

#### COVENANT, NOT CREED

I do not think a Congregational church ought to refuse to receive any Christian into membership. My own view is that a Congregational church may most wisely be constituted by its covenant, after the historic New England fashion, and in that case there would be no creed test. Where there is a creed, it seems to me that the admission of new members under it should be governed by an enlightened and generous catholicity and by Christian common sense. The minister and people should agree that their creed is not to be pressed as a theological test. A creed test as a qualification for church membership would be the death-blow of Protestantism.

PROF. JOHN W. PLATNER.  
Andover Theological Seminary.

#### FAITH AND CHRISTIAN CONDUCT SUFFICIENT

In Plymouth Church we have no creed, but only a covenant, which, however, by direct word or inference fixes the one who assents to it upon the fundamentals of faith. That is, it requires one to avow his acceptance of the doctrines taught in the Scriptures (leaving him to be the interpreter) and his loyalty to Jesus Christ, his Lord and Master. We feel that this, with the accompanying certification of earnest Christian

purpose and consistent conduct, is all that can be required for membership.

REV. H. P. DEWEY, D. D.

Plymouth Church, Minneapolis.

RECEIVE HIM, UNLESS VIOLENTLY ANTAGONISTIC

In my judgment the Congregational church should not refuse to admit to its fellowship anyone who gives evidence of being a follower of Christ, unless his attitude to the creed of the church is one of such pronounced antagonism that it would hardly be hoped that he would share helpfully in the work and life of the church. In this latter case, it would seem wise to advise him to seek fellowship with some organization in which he felt himself in closer accord.

PRES. EDWARD D. EATON.

Beloit College.

ACCEPT ALL DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

It ought to be an extraordinary case in which the church should refuse to accept one whom they believed to be trying truly to be a disciple of Christ, though he dissented from the creed of the church. This has, of course, been our practice in the Second Church of Oberlin for many years.

PRES. HENRY C. KING.

Oberlin, Ohio.

REMOVE THE FENCE

When Eliot Church, Newton, Mass., was organized, 72 years ago, it had a creed of nine articles, as most churches did at that time, covering belief in God, the person and work of Christ, the Holy Spirit, inspiration of the Scriptures, original sin, etc. For about half a century every person uniting with the church subscribed to that creed.

One day about twenty or twenty-five years ago the pastor—who was then Dr. Wolcott Calkins—came back from his summer vacation and found the white fence removed from around the meeting-house. Newton had grown to be more of a city than village and stray cattle were not numerous. He called the church committee together and said, “Brethren, I see you have removed the fence from the meeting-house; now let’s remove the fence from the church.” They asked him what he meant and he said that the creed kept some good people out of the church. They saw the point, and the creed was abolished, and a simple covenant was adopted instead.

REV. H. GRANT PERSON.

Eliot Church, Newton, Mass.

#### CREEDS NOT ESSENTIAL

I do not believe that any creed or collection of creeds is possessed of infallibility. Creeds are useful as expressing the historical development of Christian thought and experience, but their acceptance does not make a Christian nor their endorsement a Christian church. On the other hand, the inability of any person to endorse a creed does not imply that he is not a Christian. The Congregational tradition builds itself upon the relationship of the soul to Christ. If a man has yielded himself to the love and service of Christ, if his life is manifestly conforming itself to the law of Christ, the man is a Christian. If two or three such persons assemble themselves in the name of Christ to remember Him and to encourage each other in the effort to be like Him and to fulfill His will, they are a church. Ministers, deacons, sacraments and other developments of organized Christianity are not essential, though they may be most desirable. For this reason a church would be acting contrary to the Spirit of Christ if she refused fellowship to a brother who was loyal to her Lord but stumbled over the formulated creeds of brethren in ages past.

I question the wisdom of creed making. The practice of the greater part of Christendom has been contrary to my conviction. Catholic and Protestant, Evangelical and Unitarian churches have resorted to creeds. Unfortunately Congregationalists have forgotten their origin and followed suit. There is nothing binding on the local church, however, in the action of the federation of churches. The church may enter or withdraw or be expelled by the federation.

REV. JOHN GARDNER, D. D.,  
Pastor New England Church, Chicago.

#### TEST OF CHARACTER AND SPIRIT

It is not the custom of the First Congregational Church of Emporia to require applicants for church membership to give assent to any definitely formulated creed, nor is there any stereotyped form of covenant used in the reception of members into church membership. That persons making application for membership love the Lord Jesus Christ and are willing to do His will according to their best understanding of it is the fundamental requirement proposed to those who are seeking church membership as it is the basis upon which Christians are invited to sit in communion with us. It is the custom of the pastor of the church upon the reception of members to ask all Christians to enter into covenant relations with those seeking fellowship with our church, with the thought in mind and also expressed that they are joining a fellowship as broad as Christendom and as rich as a united church could make it. I believe that the test of church membership should be a test of character and of spirit and not a creedal test, and if the minister is wise the church will follow him in this method.

REV. JOHN H. J. RICE.

Emporia, Kans.

## CREED TESTS UNCHRISTIAN

To impose a creedal test as a condition of church membership is a singularly un-Congregational and un-Christian requirement, if I read my Congregationalism and Christianity aright. Not that creeds are worthless, but their purpose should be to bring persons into the church, not to keep them out. To that end they should be filled with sweet reasonableness and noble appeal—a “Ho! every one that thirsteth” spirit, an invitation to freedom of thought and earnestness of purpose—radiant with light and life and love. Nothing else is a true reflection of the Gospel. Our creeds are beginning to catch this spirit, as the Kansas City creed and many of our church creeds indicate. We need the bracing effect of affirmation, especially in dark and trying days; and the great simple affirmations of faith in the Father Almighty and in Jesus Christ and in the Life Eternal need to be made and made together. But immediately any affirmation is dogmatized and intellectualized and defined it ceases to be creedal in character, and to use it as a measuring-rod for membership is to abuse both ethics and religion.

For every church to adopt its own creed seems to me wise and well, but for every church to formulate its own creed—that depends. In most cases it were wiser to adopt—and I think as a denomination we shall continue to move in that direction.

PROF. JOHN WRIGHT BUCKHAM.

Pacific Theological Seminary.

## CALIFORNIA USAGE

Some years ago I sent a questionnaire to all the active pastors in southern California, at that time fifty-two in number, enclosing the following questions:

“(1) What creedal or confessional test does your church require of applicants for membership?”

“(2) What in your opinion should be the required test?”

Replies were received from every one of the fifty-two pastors—a sufficiently notable result. Four of these were so general as to be inconclusive; but more than nine-tenths of the active pastors of the association are represented in the following conclusions:

(1) As to the usage at that time prevailing. Out of forty-four churches seven used one of the three forms found in the Council Manual or the Pilgrim Pastor's Manual; eight more used one of the two forms found in the Handbook of the Congregational Churches of California (one of these the same as above); five used only the Apostles' Creed; four examined candidates in the creed of 1883; one used a creed drawn up by Doctor Gunsaulus, one that in Roy's Manual, one that in Oberlin Manual, one that of the churches of Northern California, and one that was prepared by the A. B. C. F. M.; while the largest number, fifteen, used simple statements of faith peculiar to themselves, non-creedal in nature, and most often drawn up by the pastor of the church.

Surely this is confusing enough, and yet it would seem as though the pastors of the state were reasonably unanimous in requiring some form of distinct and formal creed statement from all applicants for membership, because the majority of the forms used require at least two creedal statements: (1) that of the Apostles' Creed and (2) the general, and, to many, extremely perplexing blanket statement that “they accept, according to the measure of their understanding of it, the system of Christian truth held by the churches of our faith and order, and by this church, etc.”

But if this is the conclusion that we are tempted to draw from these statistics—that a creedal confession should be required—further inquiry shows it to be quite erroneous. For

there appears, on further examination, a surprising consensus of opinion to the exactly opposite effect.

Of the forty-eight men who were heard from decisively, not one expressed himself in favor of what might be called a detailed creed as a requirement for church membership. Four pastors expressed their satisfaction with the Apostles' Creed, or with the Confession in the manual of which that creed forms a part. And one, using the Apostles' Creed, expressed a preference for requiring "a firm belief in those doctrines which all evangelical churches believe in common." But every one of the remaining ninety per cent has either discarded already any formal creed statement, as a requirement upon applicants, or expresses his preference for a different and simpler form of admission from that which his church is now using. There are four whose positions in the matter is perhaps a mediating one; they would require acceptance of "the great fundamental principles of Christianity," or "the essential vital verities of the gospel, upon which all Christians practically unite." This would seem to be in substantial agreement with the majority; but in any case the remaining nearly eighty-five per cent stand unqualifiedly for discipleship of Jesus as the only test of membership. Of course, much is comprehended in that, of necessity—belief in God, in the Bible, in Christian fellowship; repentance, faith, love—but the only requirement is of that which involves them all, the desire to follow after Jesus.

Here are a number of typical replies from those who were not satisfied with the usage of their church. The test should be in their judgment:

1. An avowal of hearty discipleship to Jesus, and a pledge of cooperation in the work of the church.
2. Vital piety.
3. A desire to confess Christ and a purpose to follow Him.
4. Christian character: the Bible as the only creed, and rule of faith and practice.

5. Repentance of sin, acceptance of Christ as Saviour, and devotion to the service of Christ.

6. A promise of loyalty to Christ, as the candidate understands Christ.

7. Simple acceptance of Jesus as Saviour and Lord, and a stated purpose to lead the Christian life.

8. The purpose to follow Jesus.

9. A desire to lead a Christ life.

10. A simple declaration of one's purpose to live a Christian life.

11. No more than the Master required when He received men into His fellowship.

Nineteen more could be given which would be only the repetition in varying forms of the above.

Almost all of the above ministers were using forms of admission requiring credal subscription not in accord with their distinctly expressed preference.

We come now to the smaller number who had already brought their church practice into harmony with their own convictions, and who had a simple non-creedal confession, covering, as a rule, the three points of repentance, discipleship and fellowship.

I give, as typical, only three of these, for the sake of brevity:

“I believe in God and in Jesus Christ, the supreme revelation of His life and love, and in the Spirit of Christ in the hearts of men. For worship, for instruction, for fellowship in service, I unite with this church and with all who share the Christian faith, and I will strive for the upbuilding of God's Kingdom in my own heart and life, and in the hearts and lives of others.”

“You promise that you will take the Lord to be your God and Jesus your Saviour, and that you will order your lives in accordance with the teachings of the Scriptures.”

“You do now confess to a living and loving relation with your Saviour, and you desire, guided by His Holy Spirit, to live henceforth as His disciple in the fellowship and service of His church.”

The conclusion from all the above showing is obvious, and of great importance. It is this: That our ministers are by no means in a state of confused indecision or hopeless disagreement as to requirements upon new members, as the actual practice of our churches would seem to indicate. On the contrary, the ministers, with few exceptions, are agreed as to what our policy ought to be, viz.: That the church should lay no credal test upon incoming members other than that which is involved in avowed discipleship of Jesus.

My own church for many years has required no other test for membership than loyalty to Jesus Christ.

REV. HENRY KINGMAN.

Claremont, Cal.

#### EVIDENCE OF FAITH SHOULD BE PRODUCED

I should not consider full acceptance of a credal statement indispensable to church membership. Yet, on the other hand, I should not advocate the reception of any person who dissented, unless there was clear evidence of a genuine faith and purpose in some way evidenced and expressed.

J. PERCIVAL HUGET.

First Church, Detroit, Mich.

#### CONFESS THE COMMON FAITH

The Central Church at Galesburg, Ill., has a confession of faith of thirteen articles. Originally there were twelve. Long before the present pastorate the thirteenth was added, as follows:

“This creed is intended as our expression of the fundamental teaching of the Biblical revelation, and not as a test of qualification for church membership.”

I am in thorough sympathy with this usage. This church would accept, and I would welcome, any Christian person, provided his dissent was not openly controversial; if it were, I should think he might better find another church.

REV. CHARLES E. MCKINLEY.

Pastor Central Church, Galesburg, Ill.

#### NO UNIVERSAL RULE POSSIBLE

In this church members assent to both creed and covenant, but a committee has been appointed to prepare a new form for admission of members, and this may be changed. No universal rule can be made as to whether a member should be received who dissents from the creed. It depends on the mental and spiritual attitude of the applicant.

REV. EDWARD M. NOYES, D. D.

Newton Center, Mass.

#### EVIDENCE OF A CHRISTIAN LIFE

When I was pastor of a church, candidates received into the church simply assented to the covenant, and we admitted any who gave evidence of a Christian purpose.

PROF. WILLIAM H. RYDER, D. D.

Andover Theological Seminary.

#### ASSENT TO COVENANT

In Plymouth Church, Des Moines, we have a church covenant and creed. The creed of the church is the Kansas City Declaration of 1913. There is no subscription to this on the part of those who come into membership in the church. The

church covenant is taken by all. My own judgment is in favor of this. It works satisfactorily with us.

REV. J. EDWARD KIRBYE, D. D.

Pastor Plymouth Church, Des Moines, Iowa.

ADMIT ALL WHO LOVE CHRIST

In no church that I have served have I ever asked the people to assent to the creed, but only to the covenant. Our church has a brief creed, but we ask the people only to assent to the covenant of the church. This creed and form of admission was revised about six years ago, and was so drawn that it would admit all who love Jesus Christ. I do not think that any church should refuse to admit to its fellowship any person who gives credible evidence of conversion. Men are saved not by assenting or dissenting to creeds, but by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and they give proof of their Christian faith by love and loyalty in the service of the Master.

REV. SAMUEL H. WOODROW, D. D.

Pilgrim Congregational Church, St. Louis, Mo.

THE COVENANT THE BOND OF UNION

The primary bond of unity in a church should be distinctly a covenant rather than a creed, except as certain general fundamental propositions are involved in the very nature of a covenant. Pastors or laymen should hold the creed in this secondary position, and wide latitude in freedom of thought should be allowed, provided this latitude is held in the spirit of brotherliness.

PRES. JAMES A. BLAISDEL.

Pomona College, California.

## NECESSITY OF GREAT CONVICTIONS

In the "Form for the Reception of Members" recently adopted by the First Church in Berkeley, we have undertaken to make the creedal element so simple and fundamental that all people who love the truth and desire goodness and who recognize that both truth and goodness are best understood through Jesus could give their hearty and unhesitating assent.

It seems to us essential that church membership should rest upon the recognition and acceptance of certain great convictions, but that those convictions should be stated in terms that do not admit of controversy. That is to say, the creedal element should never be simply a statement of historic fact, for example, concerning the birth, death or resurrection of Jesus, or an interpretation of such facts, but it should be a statement concerning the great moral, spiritual and social realities, in the light of which every man who lives to any purpose must live, and it should be made in terms at once so universal and so particular that they compel the assent of every thoughtful man who believes in the faith of Jesus and present a challenge to every man to determine the spirit of his inner life in the light of them. I cannot quite imagine why any man who does not see these realities of the moral and spiritual life should desire church membership, nor can I see how he would be likely to help through the church to establish the Kingdom of God.

REV. RAYMOND C. BROOKS.

Pastor First Congregational Church, Berkeley, Cal.

## VII. THE MINISTER AND CREED SUBSCRIPTION

The question whether a layman should be received into the membership of a church, though finding himself not to be in accord with some parts of the church creed, is not identical with the question whether a minister may accept a call to a church whose confession of faith he does not accept; or whether he may in good conscience hold to his pastorate after finding himself out of sympathy with some part of its authorized teaching. I have discussed these and related questions in their appropriate places in this volume, but it has seemed to me well to obtain also the judgment of a number of pastors in our leading churches and teachers in our colleges and theological seminaries. I give these as they have come to me, assured that the readers of this volume will find this symposium both interesting and profitable.

### MINISTER SHOULD BE SPIRITUAL LEADER

A minister whose views are not in harmony with the creeds of his church, but who is in general sympathy with its spirit, should not be required, either to accommodate his teachings to the creed or to resign his pastorate. He should remain and lead on gently but surely, giving his people the Bible view of truth. His duty as the leader in spiritual things requires him to do this and not to run away.

REV. JAMES R. SMITH.

People's Church, St. Paul, Minn.

## CREED AND HIGHER STANDARDS

A minister should be required to preach the creed only so far as the creed itself conforms to the higher standards of the New Testament.

REV. HENRY F. MILLIGAN.

First Church, Dubuque, Ia.

A minister who no longer can accept the creed of his church, but believes in its spirit and work, should stay at his post. If he is a true teacher the church will catch up with him. The majority of the church is generally far ahead of the creed. Creeds are static, but Christians grow. All do not grow at the same rate, so it is always difficult for a creed to keep up with the Christian. If there is enough common ground between a minister and his church to give him room to walk about, he should stay, and by faithful service and educative preaching he will establish common ground between him and the church. If, however, there is a fundamental divergence in the spirit and content of faith, that is another matter.

PROF. DANIEL EVANS.

Andover Theological Seminary.

## PASTOR SHOULD BE IN SYMPATHY WITH CHURCH DOCTRINE

A pastor should not assume the pastoral office unless he finds himself so far in accord with the doctrinal positions of the church that he can labor whole-heartedly and conscientiously for its upbuilding. He may heartily agree with the Creed of the church and yet feel that some simpler and broader statement of the faith would be preferable, and work, with wisdom, to the end that a change may be made. But he has no right to become pastor of a church if he is *not* in sympathy with its teachings, and thus use the prestige of his position to

sever the church from its doctrinal foundations. Such a course is ecclesiastical piracy.

One who becomes a minister of a church has a more solemn obligation to be loyal to its teaching than one on whom rests no burden of leadership. He owes a debt to the traditional faith of his own church and to the denomination which he serves. He has no right to assume that upon him devolves the responsibility,—of the cost of intellectual honesty in *seeming* (at the start) to represent what in reality he does *not* represent—of moving his church or his denomination over from one position to another which may be of quite a different nature. If it concerns *shades* of thought, that is one thing. If it concerns fundamental vital differences, that is quite a different thing. In the latter case he should resign and go elsewhere, or form a new group of those favorable to his thought.

PROF. HENRY H. WALKER.

Chicago Theological Seminary.

#### MINISTER SHOULD UPHOLD ESSENTIAL CHRISTIAN FAITH

If a minister is out of sympathy with the general teaching and belief of the church, either he should withdraw from it or the church should alter its statement of faith. I do not believe in having a separate creed for each local church. It is enough for both church and minister to signify the acceptance of the doctrines and practices of the apostolic, primitive and Congregational churches substantially as they are set forth in the ancient creeds of Christendom.

REV. RAYMOND CALKINS, D. D.

First Church, Cambridge, Mass.

#### KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

A minister who accepts a pastorate which requires him in specific terms to believe and teach its creed must keep his

contract or give up his charge. But a wise man will be slow to bind himself by such a contract. A wise church will be slow to choose a minister who is willing to put such a barrier to his and their progress in the knowledge of God, and to his guidance into all the truth which our Lord promised to those who would receive his Spirit.

Usually a minister who seeks such knowledge, in loyalty to the historic faith of our Churches, and makes it his vocation to lead his people into the larger fellowship with all true disciples of Christ, will find the intelligent members of his church co-operating with him toward that end. He will not be impatient or controversial or overconfident in his own opinions. He will learn from them while he teaches them. He will encourage the free expression of the views of his people, and will especially respect convictions which are the fruit of experience.

In most Christian churches such a pastor will be able to avoid bitterness arising from differing views, "giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." He and his people will work together to "attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of God, unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

REV. A. E. DUNNING, D. D.

Former Editor of *The Congregationalist*.

#### EXPECT MORE FROM MINISTER THAN MEMBER

We have the right to expect something more from the minister than from the lay member of the church. As an appointed and authorized teacher he should stand in line with the general features of the creed of his church. He cannot be blankly and baldly out of sympathy with such creed. Nevertheless he must preserve his own independence of thought. In essentials he cannot accommodate his preaching to a creed he does not believe. If he thus accommodates, and holds truth in reserve, he becomes a hypocrite and loses his own self respect.

If he thus accommodates, and his people know it, he loses their respect and confidence and with these his influence. The duty of the minister is to tell the truth that he and others may live by it.

REV. NABOTH OSBORNE.

Burlington, Iowa.

“FOLLOW ME”

There are places where the only rule about clothing is that it shall be sufficient for decency. They are places of fruitful or at least eager activity. I should not wish to admit a candidate who had not creed enough to confess belief that Jesus Christ is his Lord and Saviour. But I should never be anxious to compel conformity even as to important doctrines. When Jesus said “Follow me,” he set forth the only test we have any right to apply. The pastor and the creed of his local church ought to get together. Sometimes that may happen by revising the creed; sometimes by convincing the pastor. Usually, however, the mediating point is the church, to whom, before a pastorate begins, the minister should present his criticisms of their creed, and ask for their judgment upon his fitness for the office. If convictions change during a pastorate, the man should follow something of the same method. It is dangerous, and actually will be decided on personal rather than theological grounds, so that a man should be very sure of his convictions before making such a statement. If the point of difference be not too vital, discreet silence will often prevent the discord from sounding too loud.

As a matter of fact, it is the business of the minister to preach religion and to make as little as possible of theological formulas. He will not preach religion effectively without a very vigorous theology, but he will be very far from any disposition to require detailed acceptance of his theology by his people, or to yield such acceptance to theirs.

REV. JOHN LUTHER KILBON.

Springfield, Mass.

## LIBERTY OF INTERPRETATIONS

The Pastor should be given liberty of interpretation and constructive thinking. He should, however, be in substantial sympathy with the fundamentals of the Creed of the church which he serves.

A minister who finds his views not in harmony with the Creed of his church in all its particulars, but who counts himself loyal to its spirit and one with it in the great and central fundamentals can still honorably serve the church. But if he is not in substantial agreement, honor would compel him to relinquish the work .

REV. EDWARD D. GAYLORD.

Pilgrim Church, Dorchester, Mass.

## MINISTER MUST BE FREE

A minister must be free. And his message must be one he genuinely and personally believes. At the same time a minister who is clearly at variance with the creed of his church should respect the rights of the church. If the conflict is real and not capable of compromise without sacrifice of principle on either side, the minister should seek another field.

If genuinely in sympathy with the spirit and content of the statement of his church he should be able to serve faithfully with emphasis upon the positive element rather than the magnifying of the points of disagreement. If his leadership is really capable and his own belief more in accord with truth than the creed of his church he should be able with patience to lead the church into a larger liberty.

REV. J. PERCIVAL HUGET.

First Church, Detroit, Mich.

## SINCERE EXPRESSIONS OF HIS OWN EXPERIENCE

I have profound respect for the attempts which Christian people have made in other ages to set forth in definite form their convictions and hopes. I respect any belief which has

ever gotten hold of human hearts in such a way as to inspire its possessor to a better life. On the other hand, our age, like every other, has the right to think for itself and to describe its experiences in terms of its own life and thought. I believe that our understanding of truth is progressive and that therefore the formulas which attempt to set forth our beliefs need constant revision to make them adequate as expressions of ever increasing insight.

I do not believe that the interests of truth are served by surrounding any man with social expectations which persuade him to make professions which are not sincere expressions of his own experience. I believe the fact of prime importance to be the experience of love and loyalty to Jesus, leading to a discovery and understanding of the moral and spiritual qualities of the universe and resulting in the definite commitment of one's life to their service. Anyone who has been brought in this way into vital relationships with God, I believe to be a member of his spiritual kingdom. I believe he is entitled to such forms of expressing his experience as may seem to him most adequate and sincere.

So far from believing that freedom of this sort would weaken the effectiveness of Christianity, I am convinced that it is the only basis on which people of differing temperaments and training can ever be brought together into a united Christian church.

DONALD J. COWLING.

Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota.

#### CHURCH SHOULD NOT FETTER ITS MINISTER

A progressive church will not fetter its minister in his search after truth by insisting that he work and preach within the limits of a hard and fast statement of faith. Creeds are stationary and fixed. Truth is ever being revealed. An intelligent people desires the latest truth as it breaks forth from God's holy word. They expect that their minister will be a

true educator, keeping them abreast of the times, changes in thought, and increasing knowledge of the Bible. Truth is larger than all statements of it. No man or church can say, "Lo, I have it all. Here it is, summed up and stated for all time and peoples in this creed."

If a church chooses to be bound by a statement of faith probably made in, by and for another age, it might be necessary for a minister to leave such a church. He would probably wish to. I think, however, that a truly consecrated minister need not be restricted in honest preaching by the creed of his church, but can preach the truth as he sees it. He can do this and be loyal to the spirit of his church and people, and in thorough harmony with both. He will yield to others the same right he demands for himself, the right to accept truth as it is individually seen. He will not be dogmatic or uncharitable in his presentations. A people who are busy bringing people to Christ will not bother over fine distinctions. For them Christ Himself will be the ultimate and final creed—"the way, the truth and the life."

I have never preached on creeds. I purposely avoid technical and theological terms. The use of old terminologies and doctrinal positions always lines people up and excites opposition. Every minister preaches to the conservative and liberal mind. He cannot expect old people to entirely abandon ways of thinking in which they were trained and have been brought up. Such people cannot ask of their minister that he preach exactly as the minister did fifty years ago. The liberal mind cannot be illiberal by acting uncharitably toward the conservative thinker. The great facts underlying all statements of truth are the important thing. These can be preached to all men when they are set forth in a winning way and with a constructive purpose.

REV. MALCOM DANA.

Ottumwa, Iowa.

## NO CHURCH SHOULD REQUIRE SUBSCRIPTION

No Congregational church should permit itself to ask either its minister or its members to assent to any other kind of a creed. To substitute a set of propositions about Christ, about the manner of his coming into the world or the manner of his exit from the world or the way in which he atones for the sins of men, for the faith of Jesus in the wisdom and love and power of God, is to be false to our Congregational inheritance and to deny a fundamental article of the Congregational and Christian creed, viz., "I believe in freedom of thought." "The Spirit of truth will guide you." Every Congregational minister has the right to assume that the church expects him to dwell as patiently and persistently and lovingly as he knows how in the presence of all the facts that seem important to him and to follow the gleam they afford unhesitatingly and without hindrance from the church. If, at any time, any minister finds that he no longer earnestly desires for himself and for his people the spirit of Christ; if he no longer seeks for himself and for them Christ's experience of God and His way of life then certainly he has no business to remain as leader of a Christian group. But so long as that is his sincere and intelligent purpose to put any barriers in his way in the way of creed subscriptions is to do a thing essentially unchristian.

When we think through our delusions we will all think alike on fundamental matters. But one of the most persistent delusions is the superstitious fear of freedom, a fear that reveals a fundamental lack of faith in God, in Truth, and in the mind of man.

To ask a minister to subscribe to any statement of faith, other in kind than that described above is unethical on the part of the church and for a minister to subscribe to a creed in which he does not and cannot believe for the sake of the service he can render is unethical and brings the church at length into deserved contempt.

REV. RAYMOND C. BROOKS.

First Church, Berkeley, Calif.

## UNITY OF PURPOSE

After a church and a pastor have had a reasonable time to understand each other, honesty and efficiency require that there should be a unity of purpose. If the pastor cannot persuade the church to change its position with something near unanimity I should advise him to step aside. When I had been with the First Church of Denver a few months I suggested a change in the constitution but concluded the people were not quite ready for it. A few months later they made the change unanimously. I frankly told them that it might result disastrously but it does not seem to have had that effect in the six or seven years since. A church and its pastor should not work at cross purposes.

REV. ALLAN A. TANNER.

Denver, Colo.

## PASTOR SHOULD LEAD

I believe it to be the privilege and duty of the pastor to lead his people in matters of belief patiently and wisely, and that he should not be required to conform to any ironclad creedal statement which the church may have adopted. He is best informed in matters of belief and is best able to lead the people to a larger understanding and appreciation in matters of Christian truth and doctrine. If a church has adopted a formal creedal statement upon which they expect the pastor to stand and in accordance with which they expect him to conform his teachings, it probably would be desirable that there should be a definite understanding between the pastor and the church at the beginning of his pastorate.

It is not easy to say what the minister should do who finds himself out of harmony with the creed of his church, but who still counts himself loyal to its spirit and the general content of its faith. Much will depend upon circumstances. A wise pastor whose message is progressive and constructive will,

I think, find a large part of the membership of the church sympathetic with him, even though he may depart somewhat from the recognized standards in loyalty to the truth as he is given to see it. When a minister finds himself out of harmony with the creed of his church, with no hope of bringing the membership into harmony with his views, I think he had better seek another field of labor.

REV. J. R. NICHOLS.

Pastor, Rogers Park, Chicago.

#### GIVE BEST THINKING

If a minister finds his own views not in harmony with the creed of his church he should first of all determine whether the creed represents the best and most forward looking thinking of his denomination—if it does not, change the creed and get the church to fall into line with his denominational leaders—if it does and he finds himself at variance then he should change parishes and find one suited to him either within or without his denomination. It is detrimental to moral character for a minister to placate all the time and not think conscientiously. Congregationalism should cultivate sincerity of thought and it is the moral duty of the minister to give his best thinking to the people.

REV. J. EDWARD KIRBYE.

Plymouth Church, Des Moines, Iowa.

#### CREEDAL PREACHING UNPROFITABLE

Credal preaching is not profitable and seldom interpretive of the Mind of the Master, who never defined any cardinal truth but always interpreted His Heavenly Father.

Any minister loyal to the spirit and in sympathy with the general content of faith should remain in the church unless he is convinced that he should sever connection in the interest of honesty.

I wish we could dispense with the creed and have only a covenant.

REV. BASTIAN SMITS.

Jackson, Mich.

#### THE LIBERTY OF PROPHECYING

Every Congregational minister should be allowed the liberty of prophesying. If he finds he has outgrown the creed, he can do what I personally have done in times past, actually refuse to recite the clauses of the creed to which he cannot consent and he can begin to leaven his church with a new point of view. The creedal problem is usually not one of specific details but of general attitude. He can preach a method, a disposition, in the knowledge that he can thus prepare the way for a revision of the existing creed. The state of Christendom being what it is I think we can afford to ignore theological details and center upon practical problems of moral purpose and method.

REV. W. L. SPERRY.

Central Church, Boston.

#### MINISTER MUST NOT DIVIDE CHURCH

I do not think that a minister has a right to disrupt a church with his discordant views. The church has a history and a life that is sacred to it and which the minister ought to regard as sacred, and should only go so far as with tact of personality and of refined leadership he may be able to lead his people into new fields of thinking and into better conceptions of Christianity. I realize as no one else can realize that the creed that fitted my thought when I entered the ministry would be an ill fitting cover for my present thought of religion and would limit greatly my power to lead people into the kingdom and so I have come to feel that a character and a spirit test best meets the requirements of church fellowship.

REV. JOHN H. J. RICE.

First Church, Emporia, Kan.

## MAJORITY CARE LITTLE FOR CREEDS

In these transitional days when so many men in the pulpits and pews are emerging from the older more literal, more rigid forms of belief to the simpler, more vital and more spiritual interpretation of Christianity, I believe it is the duty of all pastors to be progressive, constructive, educational, and above all things to get into the spirit of the more practical, scientific and reasonable religious teaching. Happy is the leader and people who can move out of the old into the new without jar or division.

Happily creed subscription cuts little figure with the great majority of Congregational churches, not because they are indifferent to the teachings of the church, but because the covenant and the service of the church are the more vital interests. When these are harmonious with the Gospel, the creed will not be far away from it.

REV. ARCHIBALD HADDON.

First Church, Muskegon, Mich.

## LIVE UP TO IT OR CHANGE IT

If the constitution of a church requires the acceptance of the creed it should live up to this constitution or change it. I believe in retaining the ancient creed of a local church "as a testimony rather than a test," or better making specific reference to the Kansas City declaration as the general position of the Congregational church. The Second Church, Oberlin, makes such a reference in its Manual and then makes the further statement in effect "being a community church as well as a Congregational church we receive into our fellowship Christians of all shades of belief." This church recently received Unitarians into their fellowship. There was no objection, at least not expressed in the public vote. I feel, however, that great care should be exercised in the average Congrega-

tional church to discover that the underlying Christian purpose of the new member coming from some other community should be definitely determined just as carefully in the case of individuals joining on confession of faith.

A pastor should not accept the pastorate of any church whose creed he is out of harmony with. If the church is on a creedal basis instead of the covenant basis and a pastor cannot accept the creed he cannot honestly become a member of the church, much less its pastor. If after honestly accepting the creed as a new member he finds his views later becoming out of harmony with the creed he would be perfectly honest in preaching his own beliefs even though in discord with the creedal statements of the church. No man can honestly promise to believe in a creed in perpetuity. Creedal acceptance can be only a present statement. However, a minister who honestly preaches his developing views which happen to be contrary to the creed of his church should frankly acknowledge this discrepancy. Personally I should wish to have the church's basis changed to the covenant basis if possible under these circumstances.

If a minister finds himself out of harmony with the creed of his church and the church refuses to change its creed at his suggestion I do not think it is honest for him to remain pastor of that church even though he "still counts himself loyal to its spirit and in sympathy with the general content of its faith." I believe creedal acceptance should be total or nothing like a business contract. The all too prevalent habit of accepting a creed "for substance of doctrine" has always seemed to me a theological vice and actually dishonest. This is mainly my reason for not valuing creedal tests.

PROF. G. W. FISKE.

Oberlin Theological Seminary.

LOYAL TO HIS OWN CONVICTIONS

As regards the ministerial acceptance of the local creed, it seems to me that a minister should be loyal to his own convic-

tions at any cost, and will usually find it possible to bring a church to a revision of its creed in harmony with his own principles.

REV. HENRY K. BOOTH.

Long Beach, California.

IF HE ACCEPTS CALL, LET HIM ACCEPT THE CREED

I cannot get away from the feeling that a pastor has no right to accept the pastorate of a church on the basis of a creed with which he cannot agree and to which he cannot conform in his general teaching. We would hardly expect a business man to accept a position as traveling salesman for the sale of goods that he could not heartily commend, or to accept a political appointment on a commission to accomplish a certain object of which he did not approve. The analogy to me seems perfectly fair between the two cases above and that of a pastor called to a church to uphold and promote the interests of that church on the basis of a creed.

JAMES L. BARTON.

Secretary of the American Board.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM IS HERE FOR GOOD

It would be a fearful thing for the church, and more fearful for the minister that he should be compelled to teach under pressure what he did not believe. I am under the impression that that battle has been fought through. Academic freedom and pulpit freedom are with us for good.

A judicious pastor might lead his church in time to a more wholesome view of truth, and then help them to adopt better symbols for their faith. He should not allow the church to force him to teach other than the truth that God has given him, nor should he indulge in mock heroics in using his liberty in the pulpit to give vent to what may be only his own eccentric mis-statements.

REV. AUGUSTINE JONES.

First Church, Kalamazoo, Mich.

## SHOULD PREACH WHAT HE BELIEVES

A pastor should preach what he believes to be the truth, whether it agrees with the creed or not. At the same time he should respect the views of others and the doctrinal attitude of the church and the denomination to which he belongs. This does not require the suppression of the truth, but only courtesy and care and Christian charity.

A minister has a right and duty to remain in the church to which he belongs, even when the creed of that church does not best express his own convictions, stating frankly, on proper occasions, his own views, and ready to withdraw from the church when he finds that he is a stumbling-block to others, or is convinced that he himself can live a freer life or render a better service elsewhere.

PROF. WILLIAM H. RYDER.

Andover Theological Seminary.

## SHOULD WITHDRAW RATHER THAN DIVIDE A CHURCH

After having given such dissent a reasonable chance for hearing in the church, the pastor, having given his promise to conserve the unity and common interest of the church, should probably withdraw rather than continue a vexed and irritated situation. This should not be done hastily but only after fraternal effort to represent himself to his brethren. Having failed in this, it is likely that he can leave the development of Christian belief to those who come after him, and he may indeed leave his pastorate in such a noble way as to win out in the very thing in which he has previously failed.

PRES. JAMES A. BLAISDELL.

Pomona College.

## FREEDOM TO STUDY AND SPEAK

A pastor should certainly be left free to study and think and speak his growing mind in the fear of God alone. But

he may conceivably diverge so far from his people as to produce a difficult and harmful tension such as would justify the church in ending the strain. Then the pastor should not cling to his place on the score of freedom and of essential loyalty to the spirit of his church. In many such cases of divergent holdings, the pastor may well stay and considerably lead out into ampler pastures. In other cases his real duty lies elsewhere and he may not properly impose his thinking on unsympathetic minds and uncomfortable co-workers. I never have had the slightest sympathy with a minister who insisted on his right to club and drag into the better path.

PRESIDENT C. S. NASH.

Pacific School of Religion.

#### LITTLE ATTENTION TO CREEDS

I do not know whether a pastor should be required to accommodate his teaching to the creed of the local church or not. I only know that personally I have never paid much, if any, attention to the creeds of the churches to which I have ministered, and have never endeavored to revise any of them. I endeavor to preach a full and adequate gospel and to seek for the salvation of boys and girls, men and women, and have not worried about the particular confession of faith.

In no church have I ever asked the people to assent to the creed, but only to the covenant.

My opinion is that most churches do not know very much about their own particular creed, with the exception of a possible few who imagine themselves to be defenders of the faith, and who usually succeed in making themselves obnoxious to all real servants of Jesus.

When people, young or old, come before our Standing Committee seeking admission to the church on confession of faith, there is just one test question that we always apply—  
“Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ, and is it your purpose

to serve him?" That I believe, is the only New Testament test, and is the only test that is worth while. The Thirty-Nine Articles and Westminster Confessions have little to do with the gospel as Jesus preached it and as it was accepted by the early disciples.

In a little catechism that I wrote and teach in my Pastor's Training Classes, I answer the question thus:

1. What are the conditions of admission to the church?

Ans. a. Repentance, or the renouncing and forsaking of sin.

b. Faith, or the choice of God as the supreme object of our love and service.

c. A life that is being transformed into the likeness of Christ by the performance of Christian duties.

2. Are all who belong to the church perfect?

Ans. No. It is composed of those who desire to be perfect through the help which God gives them.

3. How old should one be before uniting with the church?

Ans. Old enough to know the difference between right and wrong, and to have a desire and purpose to do the right.

From the above you will get some idea of what my thoughts are concerning creeds and their value.

I am willing that you should make any use of the above statements that you think best.

REV. S. H. WOODROW, D. D.

Pilgrim Church, St. Louis, Mo.

#### MINUTE CONFORMITY UNREASONABLE

With regard to the relation of the pastor to the creed of the Church he is serving, it is my conviction that minute conformity to the creed is not a reasonable requirement. There are probably at least as many creeds in existence as there are genuine thinkers. Every one should be encouraged to do his own personal thinking upon the questions of Theology. It is

of distinct value to the Church to have a creed of moderate length, stated in as simple terms as possible, which may well be read publicly, preferably on Communion Sundays, in order to accustom the Church to its own creedal relationships; but it is not to be supposed that a creed necessarily expresses the permanent and exact position of either the pastor or the people.

If the minister finds his views out of harmony with the creed of the Church, but is loyal to its spirit, there ought to be, and usually will be, no serious difficulties encountered. Theological gymnastics or polemics are not as much in evidence as formerly. A crusade against the creed of one's own Church would be evidently an unbecoming proceeding. Attacks should be made from the outside. Most ministers find themselves better occupied in constructive endeavors to win men to the service of Christ and to the cause of righteousness, rather than to be aiming their attacks at any creed.

The difficulties regarding creed subscription are largely temperamental rather than theological. A spirit of conceit or of superior wisdom, whether on the part of the pastor or the members of the Church, must lead to unfortunate complications, but these complications can easily be reduced to a minimum if either party will cultivate a sympathetic and serene temper.

PRES. EDWARD D. EATON.

Beloit, College, Beloit, Wis.

#### TRUE TO HIS OWN CONVICTIONS

In many cases 90 per cent of the congregation do not accept the creed as it stands. The pastor must be true to his own convictions of truth, cut where they will. He must be kind, considerate and above all things fair. In time he may well hope to remodel the creed until it come into line with modern views. Creeds and Covenants deal with metaphysical

and ethical questions. Now in neither of these realms can we do more than make a few simple statements. Still some kind of statement should be made to express the end and ideal of faith. But great liberty must be allowed and much charity extended lest in our attempt to unite and inspire men, we divide and antagonize them.

REV. ROBERT E. BROWN.

Second Church, Waterbury, Conn.

#### REASONABLE ELASTICITY

I think the inconsistency of a pastor being at variance with the creed of his church would be such that he ought not to continue as the pastor, certainly not if his holding of the position is a tacit implication of his assent.

Concerning the duty of a minister who finds his views not to be in harmony with the creed of his church, but still counts himself loyal to its support and in sympathy with the general content of its faith, I think a reasonable elasticity should be permitted, on the principle that the letter killeth and the spirit maketh alive.

REV. H. P. DEWEY, D. D.

Plymouth Church, Minneapolis, Minn.

#### LIBERALITY AND LOYALTY

A pastor should have large liberty, so far as details of creed are concerned, so long as he manifests a spirit that is clearly loyal to the fundamental teachings of Christ.

PRES. HENRY C. KING.

Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio.

#### HAVE SMALL FAITH IN LARGE CREED

The pastor should be in accord with the creed of his church, or, if he does not believe in it, he should try to change it, or go somewhere else. I have come to attach small faith

to a large creed. We receive disciples into the church on confession of their belief in Jesus as their redeemer and friend, and their promise to try to follow Him. I would, perhaps change the phraseology of our covenant some, but have not thought out any thing different. If I did any thing, I would simply make it simpler, without removing the fundamentals.

REV. CHARLES M. SHELDON, D. D.

Central Congregational Church, Topeka, Kan.

#### IGNORE MINOR POINTS

Both pastor and members may well ignore minor theological points upon which pastor and creed do not agree, but if he differs radically and fundamentally from the essential points of a church creed he ought in fairness to himself and them to seek another church connection. At any event every honest man is bound to teach only that which he believes.

PRES. H. K. WARREN.

Yankton College, Yankton, S. D.

#### ABSOLUTE AGREEMENT SELDOM POSSIBLE

A pastor should be able to accept heartily the standards of the church he serves, but absolute agreement in all details is seldom possible. It is the duty of the pastor to keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace, give himself to the practical work of his ministry, and trust experience to bring about all the harmony of conviction that is necessary. According to circumstances, his duty may vary all the way from seeking new light for himself, to an attempt to lead the church to revise or change its creed. A Congregational minister has no more right to force his own individual opinions upon the church as a whole than any other brother. If there is a hope-

less difference of opinion, it is his duty to go elsewhere and leave the church in peace.

CHARLES E. MCKINLEY.

Central Congregational Church, Galesburg, Ill.

#### WIDE LIBERTY DESIRABLE

No creeds in the Congregational Church have ever been set forth for ministers as tests of conformity. They have rather been presented as expressions of what is generally believed among us. They should never be pressed as tools of theological inquisition. A minister who finds his views not in harmony with the creed of his church has the alternatives upon him of trying to show that his view of truth is more comprehensive than that which is recorded in the creed. This is his bounden duty, and yet common sense must instruct him as to whether he should press his views or give the right of way to the more general belief.

Personally, I feel that our Congregational body should stand for the widest liberty of thought in relation to the fundamentals of religion. I believe it is entirely practicable in our day to have a form of confession of faith which is entirely free from theological implication of any controversial order.

REV. CHARLES FRANCIS CARTER.

Immanuel Congregational Church, Hartford, Conn.

#### EVERY MAN HAS A CREED

A minister, to be happy, would have to be in general accord with the fundamental beliefs of his church and denomination. I do not think he should be required to accept the creed of a given church.

A man who finds himself loyal to the spirit of the creed and in sympathy with the general content of the faith of his

church should not worry too much about subtle distinctions, but put himself into the work of the church with earnestness and enthusiasm.

The question of creed troubles me, personally, very little. I am too busy. I repeat with reverence the ancient creeds, as venerable symbols which have come down to us from the history of the past. When I go into a cathedral, I do not throw stones through the windows, as my Puritan ancestors did. I am not in sympathy with the creed of the builders nor of the present occupants of those cathedrals, but I reverence with all my soul the ancient and splendid symbol. I do not tear up the ancient creeds because I would not phrase my belief in the same way.

Every man must have a creed, but if it is to be of very much value it must not be a belief taken over from the people of some former generation. What we need in the church to-day is not a revival of pettifogging discussion about the minutiae of theological distinctions, but a determination to build upon this earth the Kingdom of God, to set up here the shining City of God.

REV. NEWTON M. HALL, D. D.

North Church, Springfield, Mass.

ACCEPT THE CREED OR GET A BETTER ONE

If a minister finds himself out of harmony with the creed of his church but loyal to its spirit, he should come to a definite understanding with his church about his own relation to its creed.

He should either be definitely relieved of the responsibility of appearing to sanction it when he does not, or he should get it abolished and replaced by a better creed or he should find a church which has a creed which he can accept.

REV. CARL S. PATTON, D. D.

Columbus, Ohio.

## CHURCH MUST NOT CONSTRAIN MINISTER

A church may determine what theology it may or may not hear, but it has no right to constrain its pastor in his preaching. It should in deed urge him, and be eager to attend, to such message as he presents of the truth of which he is passionately convinced. It is to be remembered that the ministry of a sincere man is invaluable, that progress comes only through seeing things from a new view point. A limited ministry cannot be either powerful or progressive. The church has invariably lost when it has driven out or checked teaching not in harmony with its accepted creeds or opinions. Eccentricity, or foolishness need not be tolerated, but pointing intellectual and moral competency the ministry of a man at odds with the creeds should be received and even cherished. Loyalty to conviction is the chief asset of the pulpit. In any case there will be more points of contact than of difference to justify retention. Some of our most efficient ministers are men whose ideas are not exactly that of our creeds.

In case of conscientious and sincere disagreement, where the minister feels he has a better view, he should wisely present it. Truth usually has a fashion of preparing its own way. Jesus did not sever himself from the worship or institutions of his day, but used these as a point of contact with his own teaching, and his example in this particular is invaluable.

REV. ANDREW OGILVIE.

First Church, Elkhart, Ind.

## SHOULD TEACH ONLY WHAT HE BELIEVES

A pastor should teach and preach only what he honestly and sincerely believes. Any accomodation savors of dishonesty, and is sure to betray itself sooner or later, by the hollow ring of insincerity.

If the church makes an issue of conformity to its creed, and the differences between the creed and the pastor's views cannot be taken care of by tolerance on both sides, and an agreement that the differences are not vital, I should seek another field. If by "church" is meant not an individual congregation, but an entire denomination, the same procedure would still be applicable.

On the whole my feeling is that conformity to a creed is something that should have wide and generous margins. The truth is too big to be comprehended by any creed. They are passing symbols, bound to be replaced by new ones as the spirit of truth, that guides into all truth, leads Christian thought and experience into larger knowledge and deeper insights. Failure to perceive this leads perennially to the exaltation of dead dogmas above vital ethics and morality. Thus a symbol that is very valuable as a general rallying-point for a body of believers may become a means of dispersion. Or, to use a different figure, the child is drowned in the font prepared for its baptism.

PROF. WILLIAM FREDERIC BADE.

Pacific School of Religion.

#### THINGS NEW AND OLD

It is the business of the pastor and teacher to bring forth things new as well as old out of his treasure house. He therefore ought to be progressive and say things at times that his people would not believe.

While the liberty of the pulpit involves a wide latitude and patience on the part of a congregation, if a pastor finds himself essentially out of accord with the doctrinary standards of his church, and so vitally at variance with it that he cannot hope to lead his people intellectually in the direction his mind is going, he ought to seek another pastorate, for his min-

istry can never produce anything but discord. It has always seemed to me that the root of the difficulty lay in the conception that church membership was supposed to involve considerable attainment in theological knowledge, as though the church were a body of graduate scholars. It is rather an inclusive school for a great many grown-ups who are not beyond the kindergarten stage of religious thinking.

REV. WILLIAM HORACE DAY, D. D.

The United Church, Bridgeport, Conn.

#### CREEDS SHOULD NOT BE FORCED

In its relation to its pastor if a confession of faith has been prepared and is part of the trust, the church must determine whether the pastor is loyal to all vital elements in it and on the other hand the pastor must determine whether he honestly believes the vital contents of the confession. If the trust cannot be fulfilled in all vital elements the pastorate should be dissolved. I believe, however, that where the minister is a real Christian deriving his life from Christ, and walking daily in the spirit of Christ, difficulties are not likely to arise. If because of the nature of the creed such a Christian pastor is compelled to withdraw there is no reflection on him. The reflection is on the church which has departed so grievously from the law of Christ.

There is no more serious departure from the spirit of Christ and the way of Christ than is to be found in the formulation of doctrinal statements by individuals or coteries with the intention of forcing them upon their brethren in their own generation and possibly till the end of time. The effort is treasonable. Christ is the only head of the church. He is not remote but living, present, regal in the fellowship of His believers. His spirit guides into all truth, bringing all things to the remembrance of those who obey Him. As many as are led by the spirit of God are the sons of God. To act as

though Christ were absent, to make acceptance of philosophical, and sometimes emotional, phrases, the basis of the church is to commit treason against the Lord Himself. It reduces the church to the level of other institutions. It ultimately leads men to prefer lodges, societies, cults that appear to them to be more modern and reasonable. Had we been true to the position taken by our brethren 250 years ago I do not believe that the gates of hell could have prevailed against us. "We do not look for agreement of others with our opinions so much as for the spirit of Christ in each man's daily walk and conversation." The essence of success lies in loyalty to Christ.

REV. JOHN GARDNER, D. D.

New England Church, Chicago.

#### LET HIM TELL THE CHURCH

Creeds not being properly definitive or exclusive, but the outgrowth of experience, should be unitive. But unfortunately they are not. The great historic creeds, with the partial exception of the Apostles', are theological, not experiential, and will not help us much toward union,—not nearly as much as the hymns. Perhaps as the churches move toward unity they will work out a simpler, sweeter, stronger unifying creed, but not unless they base it upon a common experience. As to the pastor of a church which has a creed to which he cannot honestly assent, in whole or in part, why should he not say frankly to the church, "I can not assent fully to this creed. Shall I go?" Is there a church on earth that would answer: "Go?"—provided there was no other reason.

PROF. JOHN WRIGHT BUCKHAM.

Pacific Theological Seminary.

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