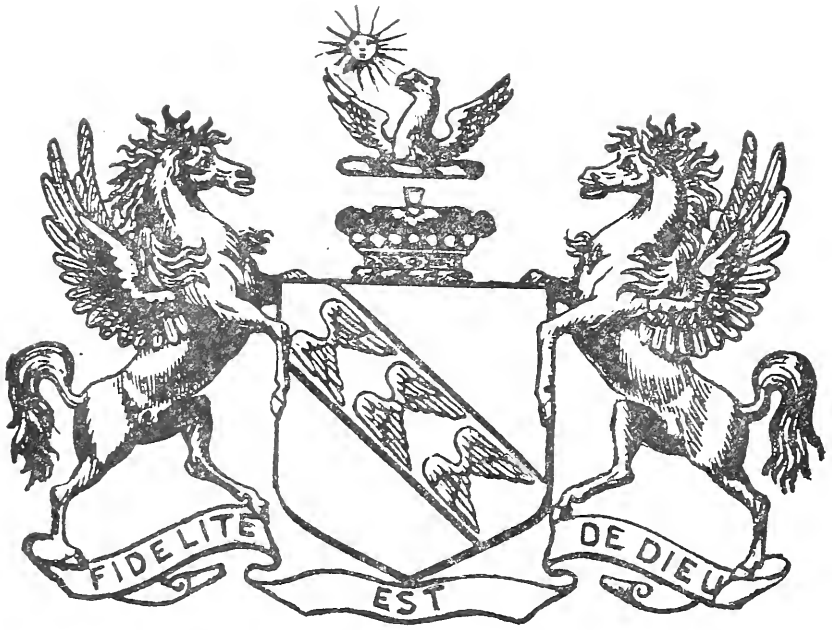


THE CONGREGATIONAL WAY

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Marshall Kingfield



The Congregational Way

A Hand-Book of Congrega-
tional Principles and Practices

REVISED EDITION

By

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ing Society



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INTRODUCTION

CHANGES AND CONDITIONS

CONGREGATIONALISM, being a live organism, is progressive, and, not being fossilized by fixed law, applies its principles to new conditions as they arise. It is in view of this fact that from time to time new statements of Congregational usage are indispensable, bringing down the record to the present and indicating the tendencies of the future. The spread of the churches of the denomination brings in important changes.

Methods of fellowship which were adequate between a limited number of churches located within a comparatively small area were insufficient when these churches came to be numbered by thousands and separated by thousands of miles. The value of the *pro re nata* Council has changed in comparison with conferences which have continuous existence and stated meetings, and the tendency is to increasing transfer from the former to the latter. The need has become felt of some voluntary continuous organization, within which the autonomy of each individual church should be assured. So from the local conferences of churches, the state associations naturally grew, and from them in turn the National Council was evolved composed of delegates from these smaller bodies.

The ministry has changed from the time when one was only considered to be a minister while he ministered to some local church, and when installation was in some sort a reordination. It has come to be a profession, in which the man once ordained has a standing of his own in the churches and in the ministerial associations.

Congregationalism has no adopted statements of belief to

which it requires individual or church subscription. As expressing the general faith of the churches it has in turn referred to the Westminster Confession, as approved for substance of doctrine in 1648; to the Savoy Confession, substantially adopted in 1680, the Burial Hill Declaration adopted by the National Council in 1865, and the statement or doctrine of the Creed Commission of the National Council presented in 1883. These statements have become less philosophical and more practical. The Congregational churches are not anchored to a past statement, but are able to express their common faith in the language and the thought of the day, and to define their positions not for the purpose of cutting off those from whom they differ, but of uniting those who agree.

In its form of worship the Congregational churches show growth, variety and, in places, a tendency to a more liturgical worship. Doctrinal instruction and practical exhortation were the main objects of the coming together in the days of the fathers. Even the reading of Scripture was omitted or greatly curtailed, as part of the formal service against which the reaction had come. The great idea was simplicity and sincerity. But it has come generally to be realized that there may be sincerity in a fuller service, and that an atmosphere of worship is helpful to worship.

The missionary societies had their origin independently of the churches, individuals of our own and other denominations associating themselves for special work. In the process of time those connected with the churches of other orders withdrew to their own organizations for such purposes, leaving these societies necessarily Congregational. Accepted by the Congregational churches as their organs, the churches began to consider that they should be more directly represented in the management of them. The National Council has been a natural mouthpiece for the expression of that wish. Concessions have been made so that, in most of these organizations, the states may be represented, if they will, and steps are being taken slowly, too slowly for the impatience of many, but we think

surely towards a more complete unification of the various departments of this great work.

We do not doubt that, as there have been changes in the past and adaptations to new conditions, there will be new changes and adaptations in the future. The Congregational churches need be afraid of nothing, so long as the autonomy of each is regarded. Nor need they be afraid to combine in any way in which they can together accomplish desired results better than alone. The freedom of Congregationalism includes liberty to organize for protection or for aggression. One great problem now is how best to do the work of church extension in our large cities, a problem which is receiving much attention and for the accomplishment of which experiments at least are being made.

This volume is intended to show the Congregational Way, to state its fundamental principles and its varying practices and tendencies. There is always need of such books to instruct the younger ministers and laymen, especially those trained in other denominational households, and to bring before all the questions which have been decided in the past and as well those which need to be decided in the future. In addition to his general interest in these matters, the final preparation for this task was the close association of the writer with Dr. Alonzo H. Quint in the preparation of *The Council Manual*. This book is issued at the urgent request of many friends, with the prayer that it may be a help in the practice and in the further development of the Congregational Way.

Especial thanks are due to Dr. A. E. Dunning and Dr. Chas. B. Rice for important help in the chapters on polity, and to Dr. Williston Walker for his revision of the sketch of the rise of Congregational fellowship.

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CHAPTER I

THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE OF CONGREGATIONALISM

It has been common to speak of two principles as being equally fundamental to Congregationalism, independence and fellowship. They have been called the two foci of the Congregational ellipse. But we are disposed to consider that Congregationalism is a more perfect form of church organization than can be symbolized by the ellipse, and to regard fellowship as its one central principle. For fellowship can only exist in its truest and most perfect form between those who are mutually independent. Fellowship is not the distinctive word which describes the relations of a king and his subjects, or even of a president and the citizens who elect him, or even of a father and his children, but of neighbors or brothers; of those who are equals and independent of each other, except as all are dependent upon all. This independence, or autonomy, has not been dwelt upon in what follows. That is implied. The ways of fellowship are fully considered.

The followers of Christ in a community, equal, not in brains or purse or opportunity, but in rights and

**How
formed**

relations and possibilities, unite together in the fellowship of a local church. The basis of this union is a purpose to live lives founded on Christian principles, for which the need of regeneration and the aid of the Holy Spirit is realized. On this common ground these Christians come together in mutual agreement or covenant. They make rules for their own guidance, elect officers to assist in spiritual and financial matters, choose a pastor and teacher, and are a church of Jesus Christ so far as they are sincere in their purpose and earnest in desiring to edify one another and to extend the kingdom of God. They need no authorization from pope or presbytery, but are competent to constitute themselves and to begin at once their life and work. But this is an independent, not a Congregational church. It is complete, but lacks the strength and comfort of companionship. This was exactly the condition of the earliest churches in New England. In the weakness of isolation and in the emergencies of their condition, they felt the need of fellowship. They sought it and enjoyed it, and thus developed from independent into Congregational churches. So Congregationalism springs from and is the fellowship of independent churches.

Fellowship takes the place of government. Government makes laws and punishes those who disobey them. Fellowship makes agreements, has understandings; those who do not keep the agreements violate the conditions of fellowship and ultimately destroy it. Indeed, in our American churches with no authority of the state be-

**Takes place
of govern-
ment**

hind them, this is about all that can be done even under the name of government. Unless the property is held by somebody outside of the local church, there can be no compulsion of obedience and no enforcement of law. A local church which does not approve the general administration or which refuses to obey in a particular case has always the power of withdrawal, and thus claims and supports the claim that the only bond which can hold together is a bond of fellowship. What others in such cases are driven to acknowledge, Congregationalists openly profess. Advice takes the place of legislation. When laws cannot be enforced, what are they but advice, the efficiency of which depends on the consent of the advised? Thus from the simplest case of disagreement in the local church to the matter of supremest importance to the whole circle of churches, the maintenance or the withdrawal of fellowship is the ultimate issue. Our Saviour said, "If he refuse to hear the church, let him be also unto thee as the Gentile and the publican," *i. e.*, let him be an outsider, the fellowship withdrawn, and he no longer regarded as one of the brethren. There is no harshness in the words; it is the simplest, gentlest way of treating an offender.

It is said that this is too weak a bond to be efficient for aggressive work, such as missions at home and abroad. It seems a plausible suggestion, and the fact that other denominations have grown more rapidly has been claimed as a witness to the fact. But there were other causes

Reason of
slow growth

of this slow growth. In the early days the line was not very clearly drawn between Presbyterianism and Congregationalism, and Presbyterianism, as more fully organized, came earlier to self-consciousness. Our Congregational fathers were in fellowship with their Presbyterian brethren and ministered to them as of the same household of faith with themselves: witness the Plan of Union. When they came to themselves and realized that they were contributing largely to build up churches on another pattern, they gravely considered that Congregationalism with its autonomy might be a privilege reserved for the intelligent and freedom-loving people of New England, and might not be adapted to those in the then new regions of the West, *e. g.*, New York and Ohio. They questioned whether they had a mission beyond the Hudson River, and did not assert it until the Albany Convention in 1852. This was largely the cause of the restriction in the growth of the Congregational churches and, considering their early start, of their comparatively small number.

There may be something too in the suggestion. A republic is not as strong for wars of conquest as a monarchy. Fellowship must win its adherents; **Strength for Aggression** it can compel no one. And yet in the long run fellowship is stronger than force; love is better than law. Mere increase in numbers is not growth. The nations of Europe have grave problems with their colonies and have to keep up great standing armies to hold them to the acknowledgment of a rule which they did not choose and of a govern-

ment to which they pay unwilling tribute. A republic must win its adherents, must promise them self-government in order to gain them, and must fulfil the promise in order to hold them. If Congregationalism grows—and it does grow—it must be because it is so illustrated to those who are not to the manner born, that they choose it;—and there are many who do. A keen observer in the West has said that if there were no such thing known as a self-governing church in relations of fellowship to other such churches, they would spring up on the prairies by spontaneous generation.

What better gauge is there of the missionary power of a church than its gifts? and it is an acknowledged fact that the gifts of Congregationalists

Its Gifts are larger in proportion to the membership than those of any other communion in our land, except possibly the Moravians.

As to the strength of fellowship as a bond of union, it has borne the test, and with reason. Bodies, either material or spiritual, which are held together by external bonds, may be violently ruptured. This has been experienced in the various denominations held together by creeds and governments. The number of separate communions which bear the name of Presbyterian and Methodist are in evidence. They are the result of disruptions. The only separation from the Congregational fellowship has been in the case of the Unitarian churches. The New England churches were originally connected with the state. In order to hold property, they were

**As a Bond
of Union**

associated with civil corporations, and it was through these that the societies, as they were called, composed largely of non-communicants, with which the civil authorities and the courts were largely in sympathy, separated from the churches, and under the decision of the courts took the property, the records and even the communion-cups from the churches. But the Congregational churches as such have never been divided. They have disagreed, have had violent discussions, have included some who were disposed to invoke the aid of the law, and yet the unity has been kept. You may rend chains and cut straps; but you may run the sharpest knife through a bucket of shot and the contents will close in after the blade has passed and be as close together as before, especially if the individual spheres are magnetized and have a powerful attraction for one another. Unless the real fellowship is broken, you cannot separate those among whom this is the only bond. No sudden act can do it. It is only as they grow apart that they can be divorced. "Shall two walk together, except they have agreed?" Then they can walk apart with equal good will, only apart. The history of the last hundred years testifies to the tenacity of fellowship as a bond beyond that of government.

The liberty of fellowship does imply for its safe use a certain degree of intelligence and Christian principle. The Congregational plan is adapted to be used by Christian people, who are not seeking selfishly their own advantage or their own way. It is presumed that they desire to dis-

What it
Needs

cover and to do what is right. Some system of church authorities and courts may perhaps be better adapted to others than those of this character and purpose. Congregationalism, to work at its best, requires intelligence and fairness, but nothing develops these qualities like having a reasonable degree of liberty and of responsibility.

CHAPTER II

THE NEW TESTAMENT BASIS FOR CONGREGATIONALISM

ACCORDING to the belief of the early fathers of modern Congregationalism, "the facts of church government are all of them exactly described in the Word of God . . . and therefore to continue one and the same unto the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . So that it is not left in the power of men, officers, churches, or any state in the world to add, to diminish, or alter anything in the least measure therein."¹ This was a natural reaction from the authority of tradition and the interpretations of the Romish Church to the explicit authority of the Scriptures, which it was held must contain everything essential to Christian thought or life. We are disposed to claim in these days only that the principles for the organization of Christian churches are given us in the few commands of the Master and the apostles, and in the wider illustrations to be seen in their example. We do believe, however, that, "Congregationalism has given a normal value even to the most incidental variations as to Church usages of the New Testament, more fully than any other system of Ecclesiastical polity."² But we

¹ Cambridge Platform, 1648.

² A History of the Congregational Churches, Prof. Williston Walker, Ph. D., D. D.

do not claim that Jesus or his first disciples set out to organize a form of government, or that, if they had done so, it would have been the unvarying duty of their successors exactly to follow the pattern at all times and under all circumstances. We have no objection to a number of churches organizing under a bishop of their own appointment, to whom a large amount of responsibility for their general conduct shall be given. Indeed, we can see under many conditions how this may be proper and wise. Nor do we know of any reason why it is not allowable for individual churches to put authority, which they might not think it best to exercise alone, into the hands of the whole or of a group. We only claim that, as we study the New Testament churches, we find more which bears resemblance to fellowship based upon independence than to anything which might be called church government.

During the presence of Jesus with his disciples, he was their head and no organization was needed. The

The Lord Jesus only matter connected with the administration of church life which the Master specifically laid down, was that which we rather unfortunately call church discipline, or the method of dealing with an offending brother, the thing of all connected with the life of the church which most needs to be guarded by deliberation and fairness and kept in an atmosphere of brotherly kindness. This teaching of our Lord will be cited later.

The salutations and addresses in the epistles of

Paul, his apostolic letters to the churches, are full of **Apostolic Salutations to Churches** suggestion as to the individual character and the democratic organization of these churches. They are addressed "to all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints;"¹ "unto the church of God which is at Corinth, even them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints;"² "unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints that are in the whole of Achaia;"³ "unto the churches of Galatia;"⁴ "to the saints that are at Ephesus, and the faithful in Christ Jesus;"⁵ "to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons;"⁶ "to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ that are at Colossæ;"⁷ "unto the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."⁸ In all these cases it is the church as a whole which is addressed,—the brethren, the saints, the faithful, or in the one case, where the various assemblies in a province are included, it is not the church in Galatia but the churches which are named. There is in one of these salutations a naming of their officers, but the churches are not addressed through them, and when these officers are named, it is not before but after the whole brotherhood. This is in accord with the incidental allusions in the Acts of the Apostles, as will appear in what follows.

These apostolic churches appear to be independent

¹ Rom. 1 : 7.

² 1 Cor. 1 : 2.

³ 2 Cor. 1 : 1.

⁴ Gal. 1 : 2.

⁵ Eph. 1 : 1.

⁶ Phil. 1 : 1.

⁷ Col. 1 : 2.

⁸ 1 Thess. 1 : 1; 2 Thess. 1 : 1.

and complete each in itself, to constitute together not a compact and unified body, but an aggregation of independent bodies, united only by fellowship with a divine Head and a human brotherhood. The church is not a national or universal organization, but the assembled Christian people of a definite city, or those habitually meeting in the house of a disciple. There is only this probable exception to this usage of the word : “So the church throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified.”¹ The readings are various but the weight of evidence is for the singular number. All that can be said is that it is a distinct exception to the general usage, the usage probably representing the facts. Churches are usually referred to as local and distinct even when they were quite near each other, as Corinth and Cenchreæ, Laodicea and Colossæ. If the church is spoken of in this one instance as including the organizations of a whole province, the word is probably used as a collective term, not in the sense of a single or complete organization. So all Christians speak of the Church Universal or the Church in America, not intending thereby that it is in any sense one organization.

The suggestion of the salutations is that the church was a democratic body, that membership rather than official position in it was recognized. **Democratic** Indeed, the assumption of official dignity was directly rebuked by our Lord, as he compared the kingdoms of this world with the kingdom

¹ Acts 9: 31.

he had come to found. "Not so shall it be among you," he said: "but whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister (*margin*, servant); and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant" (*margin*, bond-servant).¹ Thus, as also in connection with the washing of the disciples' feet, he laid down the principle of service as the only real dignity. Peter exhorts the elders to tend the flock of God, exercising the oversight not as "lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock."²

According to these salutations, too, these churches were composed of those who had experienced the **Composed of** saving grace of God in their hearts, not **Converted** of those bound to the church by any external bond or any ceremony or formality. **People** The letters are to those "who are in Christ Jesus" and "called to be saints" and "faithful in Christ Jesus." This is a characteristic of at least the ideal of the Reformed and Protestant churches. Members of Christ's body are not made such by birth or by baptism, but only by repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They are saved not by their relation to the Church, but to its Head. This was one contention of the fathers of Congregationalism, as against the claim of a state or national church, which was one of the evils brought in later by the Half-way Covenant but finally and successfully resisted. This ideal stands as against sacramental regeneration on the one hand,

¹ Matt. 20: 26, 27.

² 1 Peter 5: 3.

which makes the new birth a change not of heart but of external relation, and as against so-called liberalism on the other hand, which denies the necessity of the new birth. It claims that the church of Christ should be composed of those who are in Christ and are at least trying to be saints and to be faithful.

The address to the church at Philippi salutes the saints that are in that city "with the bishops and **Bishops and** deacons." These are the only two orders **Elders the** of officials named, in a connection where **Same** it would be strange if others existed and were omitted, and indeed these seem to be the two classes which, under various names, appear in the New Testament. As is shown later, elders, bishops, pastors, teachers, evangelists, angels stand for the same office in its different functions and as seen from different standpoints. It is noticeable that in this single church there is a plurality of bishops as well as of deacons. So on a missionary tour in Asia, "they had appointed for them elders (bishops) in every church."¹

There is no superior order in this ministry, and no suggestion that the bishop is a general officer with a relation to all the churches of a province or nation. When Paul sent from Miletus to Ephesus he "called to him the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, . . . Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops." Here the apostle calls the elders to him and addresses them as bishops.

¹ Acts 14:23.

They must have been the same.¹ So the same apostle writes to Titus, "I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that were wanting, and appoint elders in every city, as I gave thee charge."² Then naming the qualifications of those thus to be selected as elders he adds, "for the bishop must be blameless, as God's steward."³ Here surely the elder and the bishop are identified. So also the qualifications of an elder here given are identical with those named for a bishop in 1 Tim. 3 : 1-7. In addition, "the fact that there is not a passage in the New Testament which asserts, or justifies the assertion of, any superior function on the part of the bishops, completes the proof that only two orders of officers were known to the churches of the New Testament, and that these were the pastors—or elders, presbyters, bishops—and deacons."⁴ Certainly, if the appointment of bishops was necessary to the apostolic character or to the completeness of the church, it would have been made plain and not have been left so that it can hardly be inferred. Even Peter, who was, if the Romanists are right, the very chiefest of the apostles, says, "The elders therefore among you I exhort, who am a fellow-elder."⁵ Nor could he well have been the primate, the first bishop, when the apostles which were in Jerusalem sent him with John into Samaria.⁶

It seems reasonably clear, too, that the eldership

¹ Acts 20 : 17, 18, 28.

² Titus 1 : 5.

³ Titus 1 : 7.

⁴ Dr. Dexter, Handbook of Congregationalism.

⁵ 1 Peter 5 : 1.

⁶ Acts 8 : 14.

exercised the ministerial function of teaching and guiding the church, and the deaconship the lay function of ministering to the poor, or "serving tables."¹ The latter office was apparently before the eldership in its origin and the deacons aided the apostles in the external part of their work, while the elders took up their work of witnessing to the Christ who had been raised from the dead and of instruction in regard to the things of the kingdom.

That the source of authority was in such churches, alone and working together, appears (1) in the election of officers; (2) in the sending forth of missionaries; (3) in the decision of ecclesiastical questions, and (4) in their instructions as to their conduct toward an offending member.

(1) The independence of these local churches, their power of self-government, is evidenced in their election of officers. The church was before its officers, and although the apostles were divinely commissioned they did not apparently assume the authority of appointing them. Thus even in the election of one to succeed Judas, whose office (not bishopric) another was to take, the method of procedure is given thus: "Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren," and presented the need of taking this action to them, whereupon these

Election of Officers

¹ For the historical origin of the diaconate see Acts 6: 1-6.

brethren put forward (nominated) two, between whom, after prayer, choice was made by lot. ¹

So when the first deacons were to be chosen, the Twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, explained the need for further helpers, and asked them to select seven good men for this business of the church: and "the saying (suggestion) pleased the whole multitude," and they chose wisely and well, the apostles setting apart those thus selected by laying on of hands and prayer. ²

On the return of Paul and Barnabas from their missionary journey, it is said that they "appointed" for them elders in every church. ³ This would look as though the apostle and his companion exercised an independent authority, and appears even more so in the Authorized Version where the word is "ordained": but the Greek word is one which naturally represents an election (*χειροτονήσαντες*, a choice by lifting up the hand), so that this probably means that they superintended the election of these officers, as had been done in the earlier instances. In the second letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul uses the same word, where its meaning is unmistakable: "And we have sent together with him the brother whose praise in the gospel is spread through all the churches; and not only so, but who was also appointed (elected by vote) by the churches to travel with us." ⁴

(2) This congregational autonomy of the early

¹ Acts 1: 15, 23-26.

² Acts 6: 2-6.

³ Acts 14: 23.

⁴ 2 Cor. 8: 18, 19.

churches appears also in their missionary work. First of all it seems that the duty of preaching the gospel was not confined to the apostles or elders of the churches. It was a common duty and privilege of believers. Stephen and Philip were deacons only, appointed especially to serve tables and to relieve the apostles that they might give themselves to the ministry of the word, but they preached to audiences of thousands or of one, and at least one of them baptized.

At Pentecost the disciples were all together in one place and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit (not the apostles only nor any official group), and they all spoke with other tongues, Peter's sermon being only a sample of that day's preaching.¹ After Stephen's martyrdom "they were all scattered abroad except the apostles," and went everywhere preaching the word.²

Saul after his conversion was with the disciples at Damascus and essayed to join himself to the disciples at Jerusalem, who were suspicious of him. He did not apparently go either for authority or for welcome to the apostles. He was introduced to them by Barnabas, and Paul was with them for a time preaching boldly, but it was the brethren who brought him down to Cæsarea and sent him forth to Tarsus.³

After the baptism of Gentiles by Peter at Cæsarea, the apostles and the brethren in Judæa heard about it, and were disturbed because he had not led these

¹ Acts 2 : 3, 4.

² Acts 8 : 1.

³ Acts 9 : 20-30.

converts through the gate of Judaism and by way of its rites into Christianity. Peter tells the story to them all, and they (apparently both the apostles and the brethren) stopped their complaints and glorified God together for the wideness of his mercy.¹ It was the church at Jerusalem which sent forth Barnabas to Antioch to strengthen the new converts.² It was "the disciples" who sent relief to the brethren that dwelt in Judæa by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.³ It was the church at Antioch which separated Barnabas and Saul for missionary work to which the Lord had called these two disciples,⁴ and on their return it was "having gathered the multitude together," they presented the letter from "the apostles and the elders, with the whole church" at Jerusalem, and told the story of what God had done by them.⁵

When Apollos passed over from Ephesus into Achaia we are told that "the brethren encouraged him, and wrote to the disciples to receive him,"⁶ a letter of commendation apparently from the members of one church to the members of another. Timothy having received a spiritual gift, was set apart to the ministry "with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery," eldership,⁷—a truly congregational procedure.

(3) This democratic or congregational character of the New Testament church is also shown in its way

¹ Acts 11 : 1, 18.

² Acts 11 : 22-30.

³ Acts 11 : 29, 30.

⁴ Acts 13 : 1-3.

⁵ Acts 15 : 22, 30.

⁶ Acts 18 : 27.

⁷ 1 Tim. 4 : 14.

**Settling
Disputes**

of settling disputed questions. The first question about which there was a difference of opinion among the early churches was as to whether or not the gospel was for Gentiles as well as for Jews. Peter's explanation of the case which satisfied the Judæan Christians has already been referred to. But the matter took a more troublesome aspect in connection with the missionary work of Paul and Barnabas, who had opened the door of faith for the Gentiles direct to the Christ. Certain men from Judæa insisted that circumcision was necessary, that the way to Christ was through the Jewish Church and rites. Paul and Barnabas with certain others were sent up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders to get light on this question. The apostles and elders did not claim exclusive authority to decide it, but the church as well as they received these messengers and heard them rehearse "all things that God had done with them." The matter was argued on both sides, and Peter, who had had previous experience with the Gentiles, gave his witness; Paul and Barnabas spoke also and "certain of the sect of the Pharisees who believed." When the debate was over, James summed up the argument and gave his "judgment" (not "sentence,") with which all seemed to concur; after which it appeared good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to appoint delegates to accompany Paul and Barnabas on their return and to embody the advice of this assembly to these Gentiles in a letter. This is very like the proceeding of a Congregational council, except that it

was even more democratic. Upon the return of the delegation to Antioch, this advice is listened to by "the multitude together" and followed by exhortations from the delegates, who, when their message had been delivered and the advice they had brought accepted, "were dismissed in peace from the brethren unto those that had sent them forth."¹

(4) The same congregational way is also in accord with the directions of our Lord and with the teachings of the apostolic letters in regard to the **Dealing With Offenders** method of dealing with an offending member. More definitely than in regard to any other matter Jesus laid down the course to be pursued by his followers in such a case:— (1) "Show him his fault . . . alone." (2) Take with thee one or two more. (3) If necessary, tell it unto the church. (4) If guilty and unrepentant, regard him as one outside the church. This is a wholly democratic proceeding. There is no suggestion of a supreme authority or board of control or ecclesiastical court. Tell it to the church, the whole body of believers, and their judgment shall stand. "What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven."² The decision of the whole shall stand, and the only penalty shall be what in our modern speech we call withdrawal of fellowship.

With this rule of procedure the apostolic advice is in full agreement. "A factious man (A. V., a man that is an heretick) after a first and second admonition

¹ Acts 15: 1-33.

² Matt. 18: 15-18.

refuse; knowing that such a one is perverted, and sinneth, being self-condemned.”¹ “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly.”² “And if any man obeyeth not our word by this epistle, note that man, that ye have no company with him, to the end that he may be ashamed. And yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.”³ “I wrote unto you not to keep company, if any man that is named a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no, not to eat. . . . Put away the wicked man from among yourselves.”⁴ Referring back in the second letter to this advice and its cause, the apostle writes: “Sufficient to such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the many.”⁵ Withdrawal of fellowship and exclusion from it by the majority of the church the apostle says is a sufficient punishment.

To sum up:—There is no form of church government authoritatively set forth to be followed by any or by all disciples of Christ. A careful reading of the early records shows a method then followed corresponding more nearly to the congregational way than to any other. The

¹ Titus 3: 10, 11.

² 2 Thess. 3: 6.

³ 2 Thess. 3: 14, 15.

⁴ 1 Cor. 5: 11-13.

⁵ 2 Cor. 2: 6. Greek and margin R. V., the more, the majority.

Pauline letters are addressed to churches, not to a national or even neighborhood group as constituting a church. With a single exception this is the way in which they are always spoken of. These churches seem to be democratic in their practice, according to the word of our Lord that he who serves most is greatest and to his example in washing the disciples' feet; and they appear to be composed of those who have experienced the saving change wrought in their hearts by the Spirit of God and shown in them by a change of will and life. There are but two classes of officers in these churches: (1) bishops, presbyters, or elders and (2) deacons; the first called to a spiritual, the second to an administrative work. The principles of independency and autonomy of these churches are shown further in their manner of electing officers, carrying on missionary work, adjusting disputes and dealing with offending members.

The main importance of this argument is that we are not departing from the primitive pattern in maintaining these ways, nor have we to apologize to those who claim that we are not churches of Jesus Christ, because we do not recognize the more elaborate organization which they, as so-called successors of the apostles, assert to be essential to those who would be followers of Jesus.

CHAPTER III

A HISTORICAL SKETCH OF CONGREGATIONALISM

WE have seen, in the preceding chapter, the New Testament basis for churches independent of but in fellowship one with another, composed of members who covenant to walk and work together in Christian life and service, with ministers all equals in rank and authority. When the Roman Emperor became a Christian, at least in name (A. D. 312), he carried his court and people with him. As a result, the capitol of the Roman Empire was the seat of the head of the Church and the connection between Church and State became most intimate, the State controlling the Church. In the Middle Ages the papacy became dominant over civil rulers. Church and state were in most intimate relationship. Even in the Reformation period the tie was not broken, nor the relation severed. The Church still felt that it needed the authority of the State to support it. Luther did not care to throw it off, nor did Calvin desire to. The Church was composed of people of well ordered lives within the State; the ministers were appointed by the civil authorities and the State provided the ways by which the Church should be financially sustained. The Church became a great political institution with all the ambitions of the State and the State's unprincipled methods of gratifying them. Instead of being

The Roman Church

spiritual leaders, the clergy were not only secular but often vicious as well as ignorant. Livings were bought and sold. Sacramentarianism took the place of spirituality. Elaborate ritual was substituted for the simple ways of worship. The Church became a fashion. Uniformity enforced by law took the place of freedom.

During all the centuries, there were men and women who individually and unitedly opposed this assumption of authority and its evil effects, and **Reformers** who sought a return from the formalism and ignorance of the Romish Church to the purity and simplicity of the apostolic life. Those who as individuals took this position were moved by the purest motives and gave up position and prosperity and popularity to follow their convictions. Those who associated themselves under various leaders and names to combat the errors of the Church, were often so marked by heresies of belief or eccentricities of life as to be remembered more by their defects than by their virtues. Radicals are not always wise.

When Henry VIII threw off the yoke of Rome it was only that he might take the place of the Pope and become himself the head of the National **The English Church** Church. Queen Elizabeth exercised the same authority, secured the appointment of a supreme ecclesiastical court, and the passage of an Act making the use of the Book of Common Prayer and the manner of its use compulsory, enforcing obedience by the severest penalties. The result of this dependence was inevitably to introduce into the

Church worldly and ambitious men, to lower the high standard of morality and simplicity, and to defile its purity.

Among the ministry and membership of the Church of England, in the days of Queen Elizabeth, were many truly religious men who grieved over its political and unspiritual character. They spoke boldly, or with bated breath, against its errors. They tried to avoid the uniformity of clerical dress and ritual which the throne desired to enforce. They protested against the government of the Church by royal edict and against the inclusion of all baptized citizens in its membership without regard to their religious character. They had no thought of withdrawing from it, but desired to stay within it and help to make it pure. They endured persecution and loss, but remained loyal to the one Church which had been to them always the only Church of God. These were the Puritans, whose one desire and hope was that they might purify the Church in which they were born and which they loved, while the Separatists were those who despaired of such a desirable result and whose only expectation of a pure Church was in the withdrawal from one corrupt, as they believed, beyond cure, and controlled beyond the power successfully to resist.

(1) It was in 1567 that the first church was formed in London which called itself a few years later in a petition to Queen Elizabeth, "a poor congregation whom God has separated from the churches of England, and from the

**The first
Separatist
Church**

mingled and false worshipping therein used." It was served by a minister and deacon of its own selection, and its discipline was exercised by the membership. It was soon broken up by the government and we know no more of it or of those who composed it, except the name of Richard Fitz, its minister, and Thomas Bowland, its deacon.

(2) The next church organization formed on this plan was at Norwich, England, in 1580 or 1581.

The Second Church

Robert Browne was its founder and pastor, a graduate of Corpus Christi College in Cambridge University, a student of the time of Thomas Cartwright, who, while holding to a National Church contended earnestly that it should become a spiritual body also. Browne, having imbibed Puritan principles from a theological teacher, gave his ministrations to a congregation in Cambridge for a few months, during which time (1579) he became convinced that the only way to have a church pure in its ministry and membership was by separating utterly from the Church of England. Forbidden to preach, he went to Norwich where he understood there were those in sympathy at least with his aims. Here he studied church polity as set forth in the New Testament. Discouraged by the opposition of ecclesiastical authorities he went to Middelburg in the Netherlands, where the exiled Cartwright ministered to a Puritan congregation, while the church at Norwich lived on at a poor dying rate. Here he wrote tracts, the most notable entitled "Reformation without tarrying for Anie," and "a Booke which sheweth the life and

manners of all true Christians.”¹ Browne, who thus saw and expressed most clearly the principles which are fundamental to Congregationalism, weakened and worn by opposition, later returned to the Church of England and exercised an apparently uninfluential ministry there for forty years. Others, however, both ministers and laymen, acknowledged the same principles and did what they could to embody them in church organization. Here and there meetings were held, which did not dare to call attention to themselves, where the Separatist doctrines were set forth.

(3) To such a gathering in London the arrest of John Greenwood in 1587 bears witness. Graduated

¹ He defined a *church* to be “a companie of believers which by a willing covenant made with their God are under the governement of God and Christ, and keepe his Lawes in one holie communion.”

“A *synod* is a Joyning or partaking of the authoritie of churches mette together in peace, for redresse and deciding of matters, which cannot well be otherwise taken up.”

“A *pastor* is a person having office and message of God, . . . for the which he is to be tried to be meete, and thereto is dulle chosen by the church which calleth him.”

“The *Kingdome* of all Christians is their office of guiding and ruling with Christ, to subdue the wicked, and make one another obedient to Christ.”

“*Church Governors* are persons receyving their authoritie and office of God, for the guiding of his people the church, receyved and called thereto by due consent and agreement of the church,” to be chosen (1) “With prayer,” (2) “By vote declared by some of the wisest,” and (3) “Ordaining by some of the forwardest and wisest (if laying on of hands be not turned into pompe or superstition).”

The Third Separatist Church at Cambridge 1580-81, ordained to the ministry of the Church of England, from belonging to the Puritan party he became a Separatist, was arrested in London for preaching in an assembly forbidden by law, and imprisoned. With Greenwood is associated the name of Henry Barrowe, ten years his senior, of higher social position and ability than he. He visited Greenwood in his prison and was, without process of law, detained there. They maintained at various hearings that a church which admitted everybody without regard to his spiritual state was not a church according to the Scriptures, and that a sovereign could rightly exercise no authority over the church. While in prison they prepared treatises setting forth their views; these were printed in Holland. In doctrine they were in agreement with Browne; in regard to polity they differed with him, holding that the exercise of church government belongs exclusively, or at least predominantly, to its officers. This has been called Barrowism in distinction from the more democratic or theocratic Brownism. John Penry, born in Wales a Roman Catholic, became a Protestant while at Cambridge University, from which he was graduated in 1583-84. He was an earnest and advanced Puritan. In 1589 he was forced to flee to Scotland, but returned in 1592 and joined the Separatist church. Francis Johnson (Cambridge, 1581), also a clergyman of the Establishment, exiled for his Puritan preaching but having no sympathy with Separatist views, after assisting in burning the books of Greenwood and Barrowe, read them and was

converted to their beliefs and practised what was called Barrowism beyond the teachings of Barrowe. He returned to London and became identified with this Separatist church. In 1592 he was elected its pastor, with Greenwood, to whom some liberty from his confinement had been allowed, as teacher. At the same time the organization was completed by the choice of elders and deacons. A general arrest of those thus associated followed, and Greenwood and Barrowe were accused of maliciously attacking the authority of the queen, thus inciting to rebellion, and were hanged therefor. Their death was speedily followed by the execution on the gallows of Penry. These three men were the latest martyrs to Congregationalism. The law soon after was modified so that for similar offenses forfeiture of goods and banishment took the place of death. Johnson was left in prison and less conspicuous members of the church were sent into exile, mainly finding homes in Amsterdam. Here the learned Henry Ainsworth was chosen as their teacher, and in 1596 they put forth a statement of their beliefs as to doctrine and polity and of the reasons for their separation. It must be conceded that the history of this organization does not impress one with the dignity or breadth of those who composed it. They were brave in declaring and firm in maintaining their convictions. Those convictions were in the main such as Congregationalists honor; but they were foolish in their too minute application of discipline to one another and in their attitude toward those outside their circle. On

the other hand, we must not forget that the more dignified Church of England was hanging men for the crime of dissent.

(4) A far more important relation to the growth of Congregationalism was sustained by the Separatist organization which came into being in **The Fourth Separatist Church** and about Gainsborough, in the north of England, through the efforts of William Brewster, postmaster at Scrooby, Richard Clyfton, rector at Babworth, and, a little later, of Rev. John Smyth, a graduate of Cambridge, and of Rev. John Robinson. As a result of their labors a Congregational church was formed between the years 1602 and 1606. William Bradford of Austerfield was one of its younger adherents. John Robinson, destined to be of eminent service to Congregationalism, also a native of that region, graduated at Cambridge in 1596, had lived as a curate at or near Norwich where Browne had preached, and had been prohibited from preaching by the bishop of that place, before joining this little band. By the year 1606 there were Congregational churches at both Gainsborough and Scrooby. Both were persecuted, and the Gainsborough Congregationalists emigrated to Amsterdam probably in 1607, and under the leadership of Smyth became Baptist. The church of Scrooby followed its neighbor in 1607 or 1608 and settled in Leyden, Holland, with Robinson as pastor and Brewster as ruling elder. Here they purchased a building for their use, and here Edward Winslow joined them. But they did not feel at home. They were aliens, likely to be ab-

sorbed, and without such restraints as they needed for their children or such opportunities as they craved for a spread of their principles.

They sought permission of the London branch of the Virginia Company, authorized by the king to establish colonies, to emigrate under its authority. The objection to granting this permission arose from their request for liberty of worship in the new land, though in stating their religious principles they made every concession possible from their standpoint. They could only procure an oral assurance from King James that they would not be disturbed if they made no disturbance. A stock company was formed of London merchants and colonists, an investment of ten pounds by the former being held equal to seven years labor by the latter for each one over sixteen years old. It certainly looks like a hard bargain. Only a minority of the church were willing or able to undertake the voyage, and Robinson remained with the majority. Brewster was to preside over the portion of the church which emigrated, and was in fact its pastor for ten years. In July, 1620, they left Delftshaven, a port convenient to Leyden, after a remarkable address of advice and prophecy from Robinson, sailing in the *Speedwell* to Southampton, England, where they were joined by other colonists in the *Mayflower*. Though Robinson¹ was prevented from accompanying the portion of the church of which he

¹ John Robinson, The Pilgrim Pastor, by Rev. Ozora S. Davis, Ph. D.

was pastor in their migration to a new land, his influence was probably greater than that of any other over the spirit and conduct of the new colony. To clearness of conviction, he added kindness of feeling and a spirit of toleration. His mind was open to new light and new forms of expressing his faith, both as to polity and doctrine; and the qualities which he impressed on the Plymouth colonists had much to do with their moderation toward those with whom they differed and their fairness toward the original inhabitants of the land. Setting out together from Southampton, they returned to Plymouth, England, and the *Speedwell* with some of the colonists abandoned the voyage. It was September before the *Mayflower* finally left the shores of England with one hundred and two colonists, twenty-two of these being hired servants. The leading spirits were:—John Carver, first governor; William Bradford, second governor; Isaac Allerton, assistant governor; William Brewster, Edward Winslow, Dr. Samuel Fuller, John Alden, Miles Standish. November 9–19 they found themselves off Cape Cod, not within the limits of the Virginia Company, but on account of the unwillingness of the ship's crew to take them there, they determined to land and organize a civil government.

In just a month they landed at Plymouth. By April 1st, forty-four had died on account of the hardships of the winter. April 5th, the *Mayflower* returned, carrying none of the colonists. Then Carver, the first governor, died, leaving only twenty adult males in

The First
Church in
New
England

the colony. William Bradford was leader of the colony for thirty years until his death and its governor most of that time.

There were two elements composing this partnership, each with very different purposes; the original colonists whose desire was for a free and spiritual church, and the London company whose only purpose was mercantile success. These last prevented Robinson from joining the Pilgrim band, and sent reinforcements to them of young men who were strong to work, but with no sympathy with the higher purposes of the colonists. They also sent them Rev. John Lyford for a minister, who, after professing great sympathy with the Separatist views and failing to lead them from within the body, withdrew and set up worship according to the practices of the Church of England. He was sent back to England. The merchant partners were disappointed in the small returns from their venture, and in 1626 transferred their rights to the colonists for £1,800 to be paid in nine annual instalments. Thus at last the company at Plymouth was free. In ten years the colony was composed of about three hundred persons, of whom a large majority were kindred spirits. These were "the Pilgrims," a name given them by Bradford. They constituted the more important source, though not the larger, from which the Congregational churches of the United States originate.

The other source was among the Puritans, who maintained for a longer time their loyalty to a church whose errors they deplored, and from immediate proximity to which

**The
Puritans**

they had escaped. The Puritan party during the reigns of James I and Charles I had been gaining in numbers and in influence. Its members were strict in their Calvinistic beliefs, while they clung to the national church; they gained influence in the House of Commons, but were opposed vehemently by the king and the high church party. Meanwhile reports of the experiences of the Plymouth colony had been published in England, and fishing expeditions to American waters had familiarized the people with the voyage and the land. In 1628 a Puritan company obtained from the Plymouth Council of England a patent to the region lying between the shores of the Merrimac and the Charles Rivers, and a group of colonists sent out by it landed at Salem, Massachusetts, on September 6 of that year. This colony rapidly increased and included men of position and influence, and the next year secured a charter of its own under the title of "The Governer and Company of Massachusetts Bay." By 1630, one thousand persons had emigrated to this colony, and within ten years twenty times that number had crossed the ocean to Massachusetts. John Winthrop was the first governor of this self-governing colony. "Probably no colony in the history of European emigration was superior to that of Massachusetts in wealth, station or capacity."¹

They were still members of the Church of England, and had no intention of separating themselves from

¹A History of the Congregational Churches in the United States, by Professor Williston Walker.

The Second Church in New England that organization, but what they did not plan came to pass in a simple and natural way. In the winter of 1628 the company at Salem suffered much from sickness, and Governor Endicott secured for them the aid of Dr. Samuel Fuller, the only physician on the coast and a deacon of the church at Plymouth. There were many points of agreement in the views of the Puritan Church of England men and the Pilgrim Separatists. In doctrine they were at one, and among the former there were doubtless those who inclined to, if they had not embraced, the principles of the latter as to polity. Dr. Fuller was ready to discuss with them both the matters on which they were agreed and those on which they differed. As the result, at least in part, of these discussions, the Salem Puritans were brought into agreement with the Plymouth Pilgrims, except in regard to their relations to the Church of England. The second church in New England was soon thereafter formed at Salem in August, 1629, based on a covenant, and choosing its own pastor and teacher and setting him apart with prayer and imposition of hands. The covenant was this: "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." A ruling elder and one or more deacons were elected at the same time, their ordination being postponed until the next month. Bradford and other members of the Plymouth church, whether formally invited or not, went to Salem to be

present at this service and gave "the right hand of fellowship." With the fact that the use of the ritual of the Church of England had been set aside, this seems to be pretty straight Congregationalism, and the relation to their mother Church to have been fairly suspended if not sundered.

In 1630 three new churches were added to these two in New England, at Dorchester, at Charlestown and at Watertown. The Dorchester church was organized in England and chose two clergymen of the English church as its officers. Authorities differ as to whether they were ordained by the church or not, and as to whether the church was composed only of regenerate persons or not. At Charlestown and Watertown ministers were chosen by all the congregation "by erection of hands," and ordained by the local church. These four churches thus were in substantial agreement. So careful were they to secure the purity of their membership that the number concerned in the original organization and covenant were very few; at Charlestown only four, though the numbers rapidly increased. In the Massachusetts colony from 1631 to 1664 the right to vote was limited to those in church membership, thus completely reversing the conditions from which they had come, in which the relation to the state was the condition of church membership. This was also the organization of the New Haven Colony, but not of the Plymouth or Connecticut colonies. By 1640 there were thirty-three churches of this order in New England.

**Fellowship
Begun**

It is evident that "Puritan ecclesiastical institutions on New England soil shaped themselves essentially on one model—a model largely that **The Model** of Plymouth. Minor unlikenesses existed between church and church; dissimilarities of considerable importance, like the extent of the franchise, distinguished one colony from another; but when all these have been taken into consideration, the conclusion remains that the churches of early New England were singularly alike. They everywhere presented the conception of a church as a body of persons of religious experience bound together by a covenant, choosing its own officers, administering its own affairs, and independent of other ecclesiastical control. They stood everywhere, also, for a free, unliturgical form of worship, an educated ministry, and a strenuous moral discipline." ¹

We have seen the spirit of fellowship between these independent churches as evidenced in the welcome **The Growth** given to the Salem church by members of **of** that at Plymouth, and in consultations in **Fellowship** regard to their common weal. (1) The earliest appeal from one church to others was made by the erratic Roger Williams, who induced the church at Salem, of which he was the acting pastor, to call upon the other churches to discipline their members who in the general court had voted against certain land claims presented by the Salem people. Remonstrances were

¹ *The Congregational Churches in the United States*, by Professor Williston Walker, p. 124.

received from some of these churches, and a majority of the Salem church regretted its action and that of Williams, for which they also received serious rebuke from the court. In 1636 the court decided that no church should be organized until those proposing it should "first acquainte the magistrates and the elders of the greater part of the churches in this jurisdiction with their intentions and have their approbation herein." This is almost in form and quite in effect a Congregational council, with a governmental attachment.

(2) The next step was taken as a result of the Antinomian Controversy in which Mrs. Anne Hutchinson was the cause of offense. Aug. 30, 1637, the first general Congregational council or synod was held at Cambridge. This was suggested by Massachusetts ministers and approved by the magistrates and was composed of "sundry elders from other jurisdictions and messengers from all the churches in the country." The traveling and other expenses of delegates were paid from the treasury of the colony. The action of this body is not important to our purpose here. Its calling and coming together was the fullest expression of fellowship which had yet been made between the churches.

(3) A convention of ministers was held in 1643 at Cambridge, mainly to consider a tendency to Presbyterianism which showed itself in the most marked way at Newbury and Hingham, where admissions to the church, dismissions and discipline were acted upon only by the officers of the church. At this meeting it was

voted that yearly gatherings of the churches ought to be held, and that more frequent meetings of smaller bodies would be "for the peace and good of the churches."

(4) In consequence of various matters of disagreement relating to church membership and fears that the results of the Westminster Assembly would be forced on the churches of New England, some Massachusetts ministers in 1646 secured from the Massachusetts General Court the calling of a synod composed of the churches of the Massachusetts, Plymouth, Connecticut and New Haven Colonies to meet in Cambridge "to discuss questions of church government and discipline, especially the question about baptism and the persons to be received thereto." The synod met in September, but, the attendance outside of Massachusetts being small, after appointing a committee to draught a "model of church government," adjournment was made to June, 1647. A general sickness led to further adjournment and the meeting at which final action was taken was not held until 1648. At this time the document known as the Cambridge Platform, based on that drawn up by Rev. Richard Mather, was adopted. The Westminster Confession as revised at the Savoy Palace in London in 1658 was adopted in Massachusetts in 1680 and in Connecticut in 1708 with some minor modifications. The Cambridge Platform is based on the thesis that "the partes of church government are all of them exactly described in the Word of God." Congregationalism is of divine authority and

the churches are to be held to the standard if necessary by the civil ruler. A local church based on a covenant, its autonomy, and its fellowship with other churches are the basal principles. This synod which adopted the Cambridge Platform and the modified Westminster Confession as its general rule of practice and faith was the fullest expression of fellowship then possible to Congregational churches.

A long interval follows from this to the next general council of American Congregational churches held at Albany in 1852.

Meanwhile various lesser forms of organization for expressing the fellowship of the churches came into being: the state associations beginning "Albany Convention" with that of Maine in 1826; smaller bodies composed of churches located near each other naturally gave opportunity for more frequent and familiar gathering and for the discussion of questions of common interest and these have become well-nigh universal. As the nation grew in breadth and numbers and Congregationalists came to have confidence in their mission to the whole land, it was inevitable that the question of some general gathering, occasional or stated, should come up. This led to the formation of the National Council of Congregational Churches. The organization and working of these various representative bodies, meeting regularly, are described under their various heads, as is the ecclesiastical council called by a local church for a special purpose.

The story of the growth of the denomination in the United States may be read in the following statistics of the specified years from 1859 to 1903 (Jan. 1).

Year	Churches	Ministers	Church Members	In Sunday-schools
1859	2,571	2,544	250,452	228,984
1864	2,667	2,798	262,649	277,398
1869	3,043	3,068	300,362	356,502
1874	3,403	3,278	330,391	385,338
1879	3,674	3,585	382,540	437,505
1884	4,092	3,889	401,549	478,357
1889	4,689	4,640	491,985	610,227
1894	5,342	5,287	583,539	753,935
1899	5,620	5,639	628,234	746,905
1903	5,821	6,015	652,849	730,878

If we add to these figures for the current year the 535 churches connected with the A. B. C. F. M. and their membership of 59,585, and the 5,747 Congregational churches of Great Britain and her colonies, we have as representing in this year 1903, the present numerical total of the churches enjoying substantially the same form of Congregational fellowship 12,103 churches with 1,217,234 members and 1,618,196 connected with the Sunday-schools.

Of something over 28,000,000 communicants in the churches of the United States in the year 1892 about 6,000,000 were organized under a Congregational polity. Of these the Baptists constituted a large majority. ¹

Congregationalists have always been forward in education. They originated the common school system of our country. Beginning with Harvard in 1636, followed by Yale, Dartmouth, Williams, Bowdoin, Middlebury, Amherst, they have established colleges and universities wherever they have gone, in the West and South, until these number thirty-four outside of New England. Beginning with Andover (organized in 1808), they have eight distinctively theological seminaries, including Bangor, Yale, Hartford, Oberlin, Chicago, Pacific and Atlanta. In addition to the seminaries represented in the National Council, there are theological departments connected with some of the institutions established by the American Missionary Association in the South.

¹ *The Christian Advocate*, New York, Jan. 1903, by H. K. Carroll, D. D.

CHAPTER IV

THE ORGANIZATION OF A CHURCH¹

A CHURCH is a body of believers who covenant with each other for the purposes of worship, of mutual helpfulness in the religious life and of

Definition working together to extend the kingdom of God. Christian people may do this by informal agreement, without orderly organization, and be a church. Indeed this is, as we understand it, very nearly the position of those who call themselves Friends and whom others designate as Quakers. They are without ministry or sacraments, and have only organization enough to hold property and to hold together. Far be it from us to deny them their right to be called churches of Christ.

Most people, however, work better under some form of organization defining their purpose and

**Organiza-
tion** the way by which they endeavor to attain it. A Congregational church does this in a very natural and simple way.

¹ "A Congregational church is by the institution of Christ a part of the militant visible Church, consisting of a company of saints by calling, united into one body by an holy covenant, for the public worship of God, and the mutual edification one of another, in the fellowship of the Lord Jesus."—Cambridge Platform, 1648.

"Those believers who dwell together in one place become a church by their recognition of each other, and their mutual agreement to observe Christ's ordinances in one Society."—Platform of 1865.

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 that duty, agree on certain modes of action.

The Covenant¹

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

Creed

¹ For an appropriate form of Covenant and a definition of its use see By-laws, Article II of the Council Manual or page 164 of this book.

rallied in its time. It does not represent the issues of to-day. The Burial Hill Declaration of Faith¹ was adopted by the National Council in 1865, and is to be regarded as an expression of the belief of those who constituted the noble body of men who listened to it in its final form on ground made sacred by the early Pilgrims and of such churches as have adopted it as their own. The Council of 1883 appointed a large commission of leading men of the denomination to formulate and issue a statement of doctrine² on which they could agree; but the Council and its successors were careful not to give it the sanction of a vote, only in advance authorizing the Committee to present in print to the churches the result of their deliberation when it should be reached. This has been adopted, doubtless, by a larger number of the churches than any other written creed, especially since it has been embodied in the Council Manual. But any church may adopt its own creed. The churches which receive it into their fellowship will only wish to know that it is in general accord with the beliefs which are common to them all. No creed should be hastily adopted or changed by any church without full opportunity for the consideration and discussion of it by the members of the church, nor without substantial unanimity in the final action.

A church, like every well ordered society, must have rules³ for its regulation. These it adopts or

¹ See page 176.

² See page 177.

³ See Council Manual, Rules or page 164 of this book.

Rules creates for itself. It must determine how many officers it will have, of what kind and for what duties; when it will elect them and for what terms of service; the conditions on which it will receive members; under what circumstances and in what ways membership may be terminated, and what its relation to other churches shall be.

Two classes of officers are necessary to the existence of a church. (1) Those for teaching and leading in worship and (2) those for administration. The first is called a Pastor or Minister. He is selected from among those who have been approved to preach, and before beginning his work should be ordained or installed by a council of churches.¹ The second class is called deacons. The deacon is a lay member of the church, originally selected to aid the apostles in the distribution of alms to the poor disciples. He might preach, as all laymen might, and as Philip did, who indeed baptized, also, at least in one instance. Preaching and baptizing were not originally ministerial functions but those of all believers. The qualifications for a deacon were given at the institution of the office, which was created that it might fill a need which had arisen as indicated above. They should be "men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom."² They must be grave and temperate in all things and proved by their

¹ For a treatment of the ministry, the office, ordination, duties, standing, etc., see pages 81 etc.

² Acts 6:3.

lives at home and abroad.¹ In a Congregational church the duties of the diaconate are to care for the sick and the poor as members of the household, to prepare for the proper administration of the Lord's Supper and its distribution at the service, to advise with and assist the pastor, especially in connection with the church charities and in matters concerned with the spiritual welfare of the church. It was formerly the custom to elect deacons for life, as indeed was the case with the minister. Those were the days when all men expected to remain in the same place for life, the lawyer, the merchant and the blacksmith, as well as the church officials. In our day, the deacons are generally elected for a term of years, usually so that only one vacancy may occur each year; or two, if the number of deacons be large. In many churches it is the rule that after one full term of service a deacon shall not be eligible for reelection until one year has passed. This leaves the church free to select, delivers it from the necessity of reappointing one who has not proved himself to be a valuable officer, enables it to drop one on the expiration of his term of office whom it would not choose if free to select, without casting slight on him, and develops material for such service from the younger men and the newcomers. Ordination to this office was once the general usage, but with the lapse of the life tenure has largely gone into disuse. All officers should be members of the church which they serve; indeed, all must

¹ 1 Tim. 3: 12, 13.

be, except in modern usage the pastor, although according to Congregational principles he ought to be a member, that he may be an officer of the church and not merely to it.

A clerk must be selected to keep a record of the transactions of the church and to preserve the roll of members with the dates of admission and
Clerk dismissal. For this a careful man is needed, who will feel responsible for the faithful discharge of his duties and whose records will be neatly and accurately kept. In several of the states the clerk must be sworn by a properly authorized person.

A treasurer is needed to receive the charitable contributions of the church, to transmit them to the missionary organizations to whose work
Treasurer they are devoted, to have care of the money raised for the poor of the church and to keep accurate account of all amounts received and paid out. The Lord's money should not be handled carelessly, as is too often done. Not because of suspicion but to make suspicion impossible, and on general business principles, contributions should always be counted by more than one person before going into the hands of the treasurer, and his books should be as carefully audited as those of a bank. In an incorporated church the treasurer also receives and disburses all moneys for salaries and other expenses.

These officers, with the frequent exception of the treasurer, constitute the Church Committee, which

Church Committee consults with the pastor as to the spiritual affairs of the church, prepares business for its consideration, and after having satisfied itself that they are proper candidates, propounds the names of members to be received into the church, as also after having made all effort to make such action unnecessary, the names of those to be removed from fellowship. This committee should examine the roll at least once each year, and through its clerk, who is ordinarily the clerk of the church also, keep in communication with non-residents, and do all in its power to aid in the spiritual work of the church and to keep it pure. In churches of considerable size, often two or three members are annually elected to cooperate with the officers of the church as members of this committee. This insures a fresh representation from the church in its membership and prepares those who serve well for a place among the more permanent officers. The superintendent of the Sunday-school when elected by the church is usually an ex-officio member of this committee.

In some churches a Board of Deaconesses is found useful, especially to aid in caring for the poor, to welcome women who come before the committee of the church, and to aid in looking after those of their own sex who neglect the church or otherwise become subject to its discipline. The duties and opportunities of this board will differ with the more or less complete organization of the women. It might act as a visiting committee to welcome strangers, etc., unless

the duties of hospitality are otherwise arranged for.

The Sunday-school should be recognized fully as part of the church and by no means an unimportant part of it. It is an organization by itself, so far as it has officers of its own, but the superintendent should always be elected as one of the officers of the church and should be an ex-officio member of the standing committee, so that there may be the closest relations between the Sunday-school and the other parts of the church organization. He should select the teachers so far as possible from the members of the church, and with them should appoint the other officers of the school, who with him should form a Sunday-school committee, to serve the Sunday-school in a way similar to that in which the church committee serves the church. The current expenses of the Sunday-school, as being an essential part of the organization, should be met from the general treasury of the church.

Most of our churches have Young People's Societies, missionary societies, men's clubs and women's societies of various kinds. The more these can be unified with the church organization the better. Of course if they elect their officers independently of it, they cannot be officially represented in its counsels; but frequent meetings of all who lead in the spiritual or charitable activities of the congregation are desirable and tend to unity in the whole body. In this way conflicting appointments and, what is worse, conflicting plans are avoided. The

contributions of these various sub-organizations should be sent to their various objects through the treasurer of the church, so that they may be received and recorded as from its several departments.

An excellent way of bringing the various independent societies for women in a church together is for the **Unifying the Organizations** women to have a general organization with a presiding officer and a secretary, of which all these various societies for home and foreign work and for church aid shall be committees. It is easy thus to bring all the women of the church together to make plans for any special work which is to come upon them all, as well as to unify their common work and bring its various departments into touch. The same simple federation of all the organizations for men is desirable, and may be accomplished in connection with a men's club. The ideal way is to conduct all these activities as parts of the one church. No part of the church should ever act or speak as though it were independent of it, or of the results of its effort as though it were not part of the church; more than all it should never be named in contrast to the church.

CHAPTER V

THE MEETINGS OF A CHURCH

MEETINGS of the church are of two kinds according to their main purpose, for worship and other religious exercises, or for the transaction of business.

I. MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

First of all in importance are the services of the Lord's Day. Whenever it is possible there should be

Sunday Morning Service	a service of worship and instruction on the morning of that day. This should be, as it is in most places, the grand rally of the congregation, which all, old and young, learned and simple, are expected to attend. To this end it should be made attractive to all in its worship and in its preaching. Sincerity should be its distinguishing feature. Its hymns should be adapted to excite and to express real praise and love to God. Its prayers should be simple and Scriptural in expression, so as not to divert attention from the thought to the words. It should be congregational in the sense that the congregation should have vocal part in its hymns, responsive or alternate readings, and in the Lord's Prayer. It should bear in mind the fact that there are children present and young people and those of little education, and that the service so far as possible should be intelligible to all. If this is not the fact, something needs correction, that it may
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become a fact. The preaching should be sincere in thought, spiritual in purpose, instructive in method and simple in language. In these busy days of condensation, it should not be lengthy. A half hour's attention to a single subject is as much as the ordinary man or woman will give. The children and young people should not be forgotten. Some crumbs from the grown-ups' table should be allowed to fall for them. Either a children's five-minute sermon may be given, or a children's paragraph in the sermon, or a remembrance of them all along in the thought, expression and illustration. They will get more practical good out of the preaching, if it bears them in mind, than will any other class. The churches of our order have quite generally congregationalized the service, changing it from the extreme bareness of the form of worship used by the fathers, by adding a repetition of the Lord's Prayer, the singing of the Doxology and Gloria Patri, and a responsive reading of the Psalms (and frequently of Scriptures never intended nor adapted to be thus read). On the other hand, they have removed it from the people as a service of worship, by taking one or all of the hymns from the congregation and giving them to a choir, introducing much music to be sung by a quartet, composed too often of those not in sympathy with the spiritual object of the service and who therefore can never touch the heart of either man or God.

The following order of service is selected as a good sample and model :

After (1) the Organ Prelude (2) a Call to Worship in

a few appropriate scripture words ; (3) The Doxology ;
 (4) Invocation and the Lord's Prayer ;
Order (5) Anthem by the choir ; (6) Respon-
of Service sive Reading ; (7) Hymn ; (8) Scripture
 Lesson ; (9) Pastoral prayer and response by the choir ;
 (10) Offering and prayer of consecration ; (11) Hymn ;
 (12) Sermon ; (13) Prayer ; (14) Hymn ; (15) Ben-
 ediction ; (16) Organ Postlude. Or after (12) The
 Sermon ; (13) Hymn ; (14) Prayer ; and (15) Bene-
 diction. This tends to a more deliberate and rever-
 ential close of the service. These are given here
 only as suggestions. There may be a question as to
 the place of some parts of this service, but the above
 order is that which is with some variations in use in
 many of the churches which have the aid of organ and
 choir.

Extempore prayer has been the general custom with
 our ministers, sometimes too unstudied and left too
 much to the impulse of the time. Some
Prayer of our most thoughtful and conscientious
 pastors have made a study of liturgical
 forms, and out of their familiarity with them have
 either lifted their own expression to a higher level or
 occasionally have enriched the service by the use of
 prayers which have come to be the possession of the
 Church Universal. Familiarity with the prayers of the
 Psalms and other Scriptures and with later forms of
 devotional literature cannot be too strongly com-
 mended.

The second service for worship was regarded by the

fathers as of equal importance with the first. In New England it followed the morning service after a brief intermission, and frequently was devoted to the practical application of the doctrine of the morning sermon. It has been more and more difficult in these later years to maintain the second service at all, to say nothing of maintaining its parity. Whether this is owing to a lessening interest in religion or only in talking about it, is a question on which we will not enter here. The fact remains. It is not a theory but a condition. In a family church where the two congregations are made up of the same people, it is a fair question whether two similar services with sermons are necessary or wise on the same day. If the time thus saved were given to the cultivation of family religion, it would be no question at all. In many such churches the only evening service is that of the Young People's Society, which is then more largely attended, and, if wisely guided by the leader and addressed at the close by the pastor, may be a very satisfying and helpful ending to the day. Where, however, as in many places, there is a considerable transient population from which a second congregation may be gathered, the opportunity for an earnest evangelistic service should not be lost. It may be the most useful and fruitful service of all. In each church and community the situation should be prayerfully studied and that course taken which will be for the real accomplishment of the work for which the church stands.

II. MEETINGS FOR FELLOWSHIP

The prayer-meeting on some regular evening of each week is a quite essential part of the life of a Congregational church. It should be attended by all the members who are not providentially detained. When this is the case, it is always a success and a meeting of life and interest. In proportion as it is neglected by the membership, even of those who are always silent, it is made ineffective even to those of the members who attend, and unattractive to those who might be interested to go to a meeting of earnest spirit which the church as a whole sustains and enjoys. It should be devout, familiar, should not be allowed to get into ruts, should not always have the same leader, should not always be led in the same way, even though the method be the best possible. It should avoid the monotony of even the highest excellence, should sometimes be given to instruction, often to experience, and should always be colloquial. It should study local problems and church work in free discussion. It should turn to the missionary field at least monthly and read the Acts of the Disciples of the twentieth century. It should be open to question and answer. It should be more like a religious party for conversation and prayer, without speech-making or formality. It may be, though alas it not always is, the choicest of all places for Christian fellowship and enjoyment and helpfulness. The best preparative for it, for busy men, pastors or laymen, is as Mr. Beecher said, "An hour of sleep and an hour of prayer."

The preparatory lecture usually takes the place of the prayer-meeting immediately preceding the Lord's Supper, at which time a sermon appropriate to the declared purpose of the meeting is preached by the pastor, and those to be received are voted upon, having been previously propounded by the committee of the church.

**Preparatory
Lecture**

The Lord's Supper in most of our churches, is celebrated on the first Sunday of each alternate month, beginning with the New Year; in a few churches, every month. In some places special observances of the ordinance are held on the Friday evening before Easter, commonly called Good Friday, and generally at state and national gatherings of the churches by their representatives. It is as an expression of fellowship especially prized in these latter cases, when brethren from distant parts of the land and of the world meet together. Though it should not be invested with a superstitious significance, nor regarded as the one essential to the continuance of church membership, nor so exalted that attendance upon it may atone for neglect in almost all other expressions of the Christian life, it should be regarded and realized as the highest mount of privilege. Mere sacramentarianism has no place in our polity. The Lord's Supper should be esteemed as a privilege, an opportunity for repentance and new consecration. It is the place for meeting the Lord and receiving the blessing which comes from contact with him. It is

**The Lord's
Supper**

the symbol of fellowship with those who are his, the highest expression of which is helpfulness toward them and willingness to be helped by them. It is the place of welcome to those who come from the world into the fellowship of the church. Even when the heart does not glow with peculiar warmth, there is food in it for the Christian who quietly and thoughtfully discerns the Lord's body. It is the repeated confession of Christ and the acknowledgment of him as Lord and Saviour. It is a most important witness to the world and a sign of discipleship.

The Lord's Supper was originally a household rite, as was the passover feast among the Jews. It was kept among the early Christians with singleness of heart and from house to house.

Its History It was a beautiful thought that the father of the household should gather the family around him, and, in answer to the youngest, explain the meaning of the service, and with them celebrate the deliverance, whether from the kingdom of Egypt or of evil. By and by, it came to be a church ordinance, not by divine appointment, but by ecclesiastical arrangement and came to be less frequent in its observance. Like all commemorations it hardened into a fixed ceremony with conditions carefully superimposed. It would be thought almost a sacrilege for a layman to officiate now, even in a Congregational church. That very word "officiate" indicates the change. It is well to protect the table of the Lord so that it may not be irreverently or carelessly approached, but the difference between what is essential and what is ac-

cessory should be maintained. Not a minister always or only, but a Christian man of faith and prayer might serve it best, and those who are invited should be not merely church-members, but those who are confessing, and loving, and serving the Lord Jesus Christ and living as his disciples.

Much has been made of the invitation to the Lord's table. If it is his, we should not invite to it. It be-

The Wel- belongs to those who are of the family of
come to It Christ. We should welcome those who
 claim to be entitled to it. There is no
great danger that the multitude of careless and unspir-
itual people will intrude upon it, if the service be kept
simple and its spiritual meaning be kept prominent.
The invitation used to be "to those who are in good
and regular standing in other evangelical churches."
A form which is very common now, and which is bet-
ter, is, "We welcome to the table of the Lord all those
who love him and confess him before men." This
last clause takes it out of the range of sudden impulse,
if there would be any great harm in that. If it is not
our table, we should leave the acceptance to the con-
sciences of those present, except perhaps that we
should reason with one who was leading an immoral
life. Even in such case his action would open the way
to serious conversation and might be the beginning or
the means of his conversion.

And yet on the other hand this most sacred of the
observances of the Christian Church should be as order-
Free yet derly and dignified as may be. It is bet-
Guarded ter that an ordained minister of good re-

pute should preside at the table and administer the elements; only, when this cannot be, a layman should not be disqualified. It is better that those who commune should be in the main those who have professed Christ in the way provided by the church; yet there are exceptions to this, which is not a rule of the Master of the feast, but only a general safeguard provided by those who are after all only guests themselves.

The ordinance of baptism is usually associated with that of the Lord's Supper, because it is a part of the confession of faith made by adults who come into the membership of the church and is ordinarily administered at the same time. Congregationalists accept the teaching of our Lord upon this rite as a mark of discipleship and a symbol of spiritual cleansing. They lay but little stress upon the mode of the application of the water, by no means accepting the statement that because *BAPTO* means to dip, therefore the derived word *BAPTIZO* has the same meaning; nor do they believe that baptism is a sign of burial but of purification. Even if they did, they would exalt the meaning of it above the form of the rite, and are not unmindful of the contrast between any baptism of water and baptism by the Holy Spirit. While they therefore usually administer baptism by sprinkling it is not uncommon for a Congregational minister to administer the rite by immersing in running water; which last condition was held to be essential

Baptism :
its Mode

among the Jews from whom this sign of purification was borrowed.

Congregationalists, in common with the majority of other Christians, hold that believers and their households are proper subjects of baptism, not **Its Subjects** because it was distinctly commanded by Jesus, but because the rite by which this was preceded was so administered, and because there are no indications in the New Testament that the Christian Church was to be narrower than the Jewish, and there are indications that it was as inclusive of the household. Children are not baptized in order to constitute any new relation between them and the Lord or his Church, but in recognition of the fact that the children of Christian parents belong to the family of God and have a right to the Christian teaching and example of the home and the church. The baptism of children is not, however, insisted on, but left to the individual conviction of parents.

III. MEETINGS FOR INSTRUCTION

The Sunday-school is held either an hour before the morning service, or at an entirely separate time in the **The** afternoon, or, by an increasing number of **Sunday-** churches, at noon. It should be what its **School** name indicates, a school. Its primary object is not worship, but instruction.

The opening service should prepare the way for the teaching, and should not be so complete and full as to suggest to any one that the Sunday-school may be regarded as a substitute for the morning service in

the church. Indeed, where it follows, it might well be regarded as an appendix to that service and be introduced only with a hymn and brief prayer for a blessing on the study of the Word, so that the hour might be shortened and those who have attended the public worship not feel wearied by a prolonged second service. The school should be so arranged and adjusted to the other services that all who possibly can may feel it a privilege to attend. To this end the teaching should be of the best; large classes, teaching by departments, a careful grading both of teachers and scholars should be made, to enable this part of the church to fulfil its function and to do its best work.

Teachers' meetings to prepare for their work and special Bible classes held during the week used to be of frequent occurrence but have been crowded out by other appointments, ecclesiastical and social, and in the thought of some made less necessary by the lesson helps provided for the use of teachers at home.

The wise church will see to it that at some time during the week there is given opportunity for the young people and the children to meet the pastor, or some other person especially fitted for that service, who will instruct them upon matters directly connected with the Christian life and its duties. If not continuously held, classes may be formed at least twice in each year to which all of certain ages who consider that they are

or who desire to be Christians may be invited. The young children may be led in a half hour meeting to a simple, natural Christian life, taught to pray and to love God. The older young people may be specially taught and trained for membership in the church with an intelligent conception of all which that relation means. The pastor who will devote his personal attention to these classes once a week for half of each year will do his best seed-sowing in this easy way and gather his most fruitful harvests in these fields.

IV. MEETINGS FOR BUSINESS

It is usual to provide in the by-laws that action upon the reception and dismissal of members to other churches and the appointment of delegates¹ to councils and conferences of churches may be taken at any of the regular meetings for worship, but not upon other business. In other cases the particular business to be transacted must be mentioned in the call made from the pulpit on a previous day, or posted according to law.

At ordinary meetings of the church for business, the pastor, if a member of that particular church,

¹ A church or conference which appoints delegates to represent it in a council or in a State Association of the National Council should also send them, that is, should provide for the expenses of attendance. Otherwise a delegate must be selected who can afford to pay his own way or who has other business or pleasure calling him to the place, thus subordinating the affairs of the church or denomination to some other interest than its representation by its best and wisest members.

**Special
Business**

should preside, unless it is otherwise provided in the by-laws of the church. In his absence, it is customary in some churches for the deacon who is the senior in the term of his official service to take his place. In case of other business than that named above, a moderator should be elected. It is manifestly improper that the pastor should preside at a meeting where the subject of his continuance in the pastorate is to be considered, or any matter regarding his relation to the church. Even if he has a legal right as a member to be there, he should never claim it. A minister who stands on his legal rights either has already lost, or is sure to forfeit, his claim under the law of Christ.

**Annual
Meeting**

At the annual meeting of an incorporated church the moderator must be elected, usually by ballot, and it depends on the church whether it shall be the pastor or not. If some other member will preside better or more impartially, that should decide the choice. The annual meeting of the church used to be attended by only a few of its members, who listened to the reading of its records and attended to the election of its officers only from a stern sense of duty. This was the condition in a church of which the writer was the pastor. Not more than ten per cent of the membership of the church was accustomed to participate in the most important meeting of the year, and this was the common condition in all the churches. The pastor was greatly dissatisfied, believing that in some way this ought to be a great gathering of the whole church. He there-

fore secured the appointment of a committee to unite with him in trying to attain this result. The plan was devised and adopted by the church of (1) notifying personally every member of the church, present or absent, (2) of calling the roll for a response from each one, (3) of gathering round the family table and breaking bread together, and, in addition to (4) the records and elections, of hearing (5) brief reports from every department of the work of the church;—the church committee, clerk, treasurer, Sunday-school superintendent, Young People's Society and the various missionary organizations of men, women and children. The result was a great awakening of a sense of fellowship in the church, a feeling of responsibility for its work, a definite knowledge of all its various kinds of work and an active interest in its organization for the coming year. The plan has been widely, perhaps generally adopted, at least in the cities and larger towns throughout the land. We believe that in this way the annual meeting has been made the great annual festival of a large number of churches. Time will be saved by having a meeting a week in advance for nominating officers or by sending slips for written nominations beforehand to each resident member of the church.

CHAPTER VI

THE MEMBERSHIP OF A CHURCH

A CONGREGATIONAL church should consist of such persons and such only as give evidence that they have given themselves to trust and follow the **Conditions** Lord Jesus Christ and have been renewed by the Holy Spirit, who have confessed him as their Saviour and Lord and have covenanted to worship God and work together for the advancement of his kingdom in a church organized upon Congregational principles.

Those to be received into the membership of such a church must approve themselves, either through some member of that committee, or directly to the committee of the church to its satisfaction, as to their Christian experience, or, if coming from other churches, present letters of dismissal and recommendation or satisfactory substitutes therefor. They should be publicly proposed for membership from the pulpit by the committee on some Lord's Day previous to their election by the church to its membership if that be the usage of the church, and, ordinarily at the service when the Lord's Supper is administered, should enter into the covenant, subscribe to the by-laws of the church and be formally received into its fellowship. A form for this reception is adopted by each church.¹

Members are expected, first of all, to be faithful to

¹ See form page 181.

the spiritual duties essential to the Christian life, to attend habitually the services of the church

Duties of which they are members, to give regularly for its support and charities, and to share in its organized work.

Members in good standing, to whom the church has not voted letters of dismissal, who are twenty-one years of age, or of the age prescribed by

Rights the state, and such only, may vote in the meetings of the church for business. A member is in good standing until the church by vote, after due notice and hearing, has deprived him of the privileges of membership, and upon his application is entitled to a letter of dismissal and recommendation in the regular form. A church should not maintain in its own membership any person whom it does not feel at liberty to recommend to the fellowship of another church.

One who has removed to another community should promptly request a letter of dismissal to the church which he is able to attend. An unnecessary delay to do so casts a shadow upon

Termination by Letter his fidelity to either church. Protracted delay, by the rules of many churches for two years, without explanation or some good reason, may lead to a loss of the privileges and rights of membership. In the same way habitual non-attendance, or persistent failure to contribute or cooperate, may lead to the termination of the membership of even a resident member.

A letter of dismissal is not valid as a recommenda-

tion for an indefinite time—frequently the limit of one year is stated in the letter. If the church **Time Limit** to which such a letter is presented is satisfied, by knowledge or investigation of the facts, it may receive one upon a letter of older date, but in such a case it assumes the responsibility.

A letter of dismissal and recommendation from the nature of the case should be addressed to some church. If one is going to a place with **To a Particular Church** the religious organizations of which he is unfamiliar, or is to spend some time in travel, and desires to be known as a professing Christian, he may receive a certificate of his membership and good standing and a commendation to the fellowship of any Christian church with which he may temporarily worship. When he has decided where to locate his membership, he can ask for a letter of dismissal. But a letter of transfer “to any church” is not customary or proper. This general letter is sometimes dishonestly sought and granted as an easy way out of church membership. This is not the right way to rid the church of a troublesome member. There is an honest way out, one respectful both to the member and the church, and that should be the way used.

In all cases the church receiving a member by letter from another church should, through its clerk, send **Notice of Reception** word of his reception into its fellowship,¹ so that his relation to the former church may fully cease. It is unfortunate that this custom and courtesy are so often neglected.

¹ See page 200.

It is a plan adopted by many pastors, when a letter is granted to another church, to write to the pastor or, if there is none, to the clerk of the church addressed, stating the fact that such a letter has been voted.¹ The knowledge may aid in its prompt presentation and use.

**Notification
of Letter**

If a member desires to join a religious body with which the church of which he is a member is not in fellowship, or which would not receive its letter, the church may, at his request, give him a certificate of his good standing and terminate his membership.

**Certificate of
Standing**

If a member, against whose moral character there is no charge, requests to be released from his covenant obligations to the church, for reasons which the church may finally deem satisfactory, after it shall have patiently and kindly endeavored to secure his continuance in its fellowship, such request may be granted and his membership terminated. In these two cases this is the usage in the best churches to-day, though it was not that of the fathers. Their theory was that no church could release a member from the obligations assumed in his covenant, that they remained in force until death, and that the church could only deal with him after his open sin or neglect had made it evident that he had repudiated his vows. The thought behind the modern usage is that there is a distinction between the promises made to God and those made to the church.

Release

¹ See page 201.

With the former the church has nothing to do, except to witness them. As to the covenant with the church, if the member has conscientiously changed his convictions and wishes to be a member of another communion, it is his right, and the church will neither do him good nor receive good from him, by holding him to a nominal membership against his will. And even if he finds that he was mistaken in thinking himself a child of God and that he is not in sympathy with the Lord's people or service, having caused no scandal to the church, it is his right to withdraw, and, so far as the church is concerned, be released from his vows. Indeed, if he does not belong there, he is in better relations to it outside of it than in it, and more likely to come into right relations to it in time. The church is not a prison but a home, not a government but a fellowship, and that must be voluntary to be real.

In so serious a matter as the termination of membership on account of an offense or unexplained absence, nothing should be done hurriedly, and it is a good precaution to establish the rule that any proposition for such action lie over to another meeting, so that the matter may be carefully considered and may receive the prayerful attention of the church more than once. No committee should take final action on the termination of membership, nor should the church put that power out of its own hands.

On the other hand, if a member becomes an offense to the church and to its good name by reason of im-

Withdrawal of Fellowship moral or unchristian conduct, or by persistent breach of his covenant vows, the church may terminate his membership, but only after due notice and hearing and after faithful efforts have been made to bring such member to repentance and amendment. In such a case the church committee should do what they can to bring the member involved to a realization of his offending and to repentance therefor. If all such efforts fail, it is their duty to report the case to the church. If the church decides to entertain the complaint, which should be made in writing, it should provide for a hearing before the church, or more often before a committee, notifying the accused and furnishing him with a copy of the charges. If he declines to attend at the time appointed, or fails to give satisfactory reasons for not doing so, the church may proceed in his absence. If present, he may call to his aid any member of the church as his counsel. All such proceedings should be pervaded by a spirit of Christian kindness and forbearance, but should an adverse decision be reached, the church may proceed to declare the offender to be no longer in its membership.

It does not seem necessary or wise for a church in terminating membership to inflict censure, or indeed **The Record and Announcement** to express its judgment except as to the facts. The church can only record the fact that a certain person is or is not in its fellowship, that is, entitled to and actually participating in its work and privileges. The old idea of excommunication as a censure and curse was not a

Scriptural one. Excommunication means simply "out of communion." It is sufficient to record on the books of the church the declaration that such an one "is no longer in the communion of this church," and state the reason for this declaration. It may be an absence unexplained, or a gross sin; the statement of the fact suggests the measure of blame. Nor need such action be announced from the pulpit on the Lord's Day. That might do much more harm than good and disturb the service and distract attention. A church should always act in such a case with deep regret, and this should be manifested in each step of the proceeding and in the result and its record and announcement.

It should always be understood also that no withdrawal of fellowship for any reason is final, and that any person whose membership has been terminated may be restored by vote of the church, on evidence of his repentance and restoration, if for some offense, or, upon satisfactory explanation, if on account of continued absence.

Should any unhappy differences arise between members, the aggrieved member should follow, in a kindly spirit, the rules given by our Lord in the eighteenth chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew.

Private Offenses In case of grave difficulty the church should be ready, if requested, to ask advice of a mutual council.

A Mutual Council

CHAPTER VII

THE MINISTRY

THE New Testament recognizes two classes of office in the church of Christ, or rather two kinds of service. Ministering is more important in its view than a ministry ; overseeing of more consequence than being a bishop, even as the disciples were simply learners and the apostles only men who were sent, that is, missionaries.

The first of these two methods of service is that of teaching and the care of the spiritual condition and work of the church. In the New Testament the same men are called elders, as **Various Names for One Office** expressing the dignity and gravity of those who are the head of the Christian household ; overseers, bishops, as those who have the oversight of the organization ; pastors, as those who lead and feed the flock both as individuals and as a whole ; evangelists, as emphasizing their function as preachers, and perhaps angels, as messengers between the churches. The differences are those of function, and by no means designate offices different in dignity or mutually exclusive. We shall devote this chapter to this office of elder or bishop, or, in our modern usage, of pastor and teacher, the definition and consideration of the office of deacon being found in Chapter IV.

In the early days, when a church desired a minister

it looked over its own membership first to see if there was one among them fitted by nature and **Licensure** by grace to lead and teach the rest. In later days, men have been prepared for the sacred office by years of study and have sought to enter the work. They have appeared as applicants, or at least as those who stood ready to be called into this relation to some particular church. It was desirable that they should have not only the approval of their teachers but also of some body of men fitted to pass upon the results of this teaching and upon their general qualifications for the special duties of their spiritual office.

The bodies to which this application for licensure, or rather for approbation to preach, is made are either local associations of churches or of ministers.¹ The usage in the west and in certain parts of New England is that this approbation to preach is given by an ecclesiastical body, that is, one composed of representatives of the churches. This is usually done on the recommendation of a strong committee, a majority of whom at least are ministers, which conducts the examination

¹ "It is expedient that they who enter on the work of preaching the gospel be not only qualified for communion of saints, but also, that, except in cases extraordinary, they give proof of their gifts and fitness for the said work unto the pastors of churches, of known abilities to discern and judge of their qualifications, that they may be sent forth with solemn approbation and prayer, which we judge needful, that no doubt may remain concerning their being called unto the work; and for preventing (so much as in us lieth) ignorant and rash intruders."—*Saybrook Platform*, (1708), II : 7.

and reports to the conference of churches. This body will usually sustain the recommendation. In New England this certification is most often given by a body of ministers.' Such a body is perhaps best fitted to pass upon the qualifications of those seeking this work. They are themselves men who have received the education which they seek in the applicants, and it is presumed that they are men whose hearts the grace of God has fitted for their own work. This approbation given by either body should be an intelligent one, and this introduction to the churches should be so guarded and discriminating as to be of real value. That it is only introductory is shown by the fact that it is for a limited time and is rarely, if ever, given as a permanent endorsement or reference. A careless presentation of men as candidates for the sacred office is

¹ "Letters of commendation from experienced pastors which a young minister would naturally take when going among the churches as a candidate, gradually assumed the form and authority of credentials, till, in 1790, the convention of Congregational ministers virtually made them necessary by recommending that only those bearing such papers from clerical bodies be admitted to the pulpits. Thus the business of testing the qualifications of a young man for the ministry silently and gradually passed from the churches to the clergy.

"Such credentials are merely intended to express the approbation of those who give them; and no Congregational association claims, or ever can rightfully claim, the authority implied in the word license, which in later years has inadvertently crept into our associational nomenclature."—"Historical Sketch of Congregational Churches in Massachusetts" p. 288, Joseph S. Clark, D. D.

fraught with evils, which are only exaggerated by corresponding lack of care on the part of the churches in receiving and ordaining them.

The examination of candidates for licensure or approbation should have regard to their personal Christian experience, their motives in entering the ministry, their knowledge of the Bible in the original tongues and in the English Version, their ability to teach and preach, their convictions as to Christian truth, their knowledge and acceptance of Congregational principles and practice, and their interest in Christian missions at home and abroad.

After reports by committees made up of some of the most competent men in our fellowship and full discussions in the National Councils of 1880, 1883 and 1886, the National Council of 1886 adopted the following resolution, which defines ministerial standing :

Resolved, That standing in the Congregational ministry is acquired by the fulfilment of these three conditions, namely :

- (a) Membership in a Congregational church.
- (b) Ordination to the Christian ministry.
- (c) Reception as an ordained minister into the fellowship of the Congregational churches in accordance with the usage of the state or territorial organization of churches in which the applicant may reside ; and such standing is to be continued in accordance with these usages, it being understood that a *pro re nata* council (that is, a council called to consider that

special case alone) is the ultimate resort in all cases in question."

The first thing for a member of a Congregational church to do, who feels the call of duty or desire to enter the Christian ministry in connection with the Congregational churches, is to make sure that the call is of God. For this he should scan his motives, study the work as a privilege and opportunity and not at all from a commercial standpoint, ask the Lord to make the matter plain to him and seek advice from Christian friends on whose judgment of his adaptation to the demands of the ministry he can largely rely. If he expects to be a pastor and to preach for a lifetime, he should lay solid foundations of Bible and other study in a theological seminary or elsewhere, and learn how to approach men and women and children by an apprenticeship to some mission work. When his preliminary preparation has been thus completed, he should seek an approbation to preach from a body of ministers or churches, as may be the custom in his locality. If, as sometimes happens, delay and fuller preparation are counseled, he should take the advice meekly and act upon it, sure that it is meant only for his good and greater usefulness. If his request is granted and he is given this introduction to the churches, he goes out strengthened in his own spirit and in his position.

When he has accepted a call to some pastorate, the church to which he is called should invite an ecclesias-

tical council for his ordination and installation. This completes the second step into ministerial standing. He should transfer his membership to the church of which he is pastor. The third step is his application to be received into a local ministerial or ecclesiastical body (association of ministers or conference of churches) as may be the usage in the region where his work lies. He thus becomes a Congregational minister in full standing and fellowship.

Early Congregationalism in Old and New England regarded the ministry as a function rather than as an office. A minister was such only so long as he ministered to some church as its pastor or teacher. If he removed to another pastorate, an ecclesiastical council gave sanction to the beginning of a new ministry. But in the growth of the churches and of the Christian community, there came to be other forms of service besides the pastorate which were regarded as ministerial. Presidents and professors in theological seminaries and colleges, editors of religious papers, secretaries of missionary societies, superintendents of home missionary work; as these positions developed one after another, ministers were naturally demanded for them. Their work was that of ministers-at-large rather than of particular congregations. There came to be also a class of superannuated men, who had exercised a faithful ministry as long as their strength lasted, had enjoyed the privileges of ministerial fellowship, and whom their brethren desired still to regard as brethren in the ministry worthy of especial honor. Others

toward whom the same feelings were held, were temporarily set aside from this especial work.¹

In addition to the eighty per cent of ministers in pastoral work who have not been certified in their ministerial standing by councils since their first ordination, and in the increase of the above mentioned classes of ministers not engaged in such work, the question of the maintenance and certification of ministerial standing has come to be one of great importance.

On removing from the church of which a minister was ordained pastor he should see that his membership in the local body of ministers or **Transferring Membership** churches is transferred to the corresponding body within whose limits he resides. This, if his standing in such local association or conference is good, will insure him a place in the list of Congregational ministers published annually in the Year Book. This Year Book list does not affirm the good standing of all who are upon it. It is made up of the names sent in by the registrars of state or local ecclesiastical bodies, or, in some states, of ministerial associations. It is only presumptive evidence as to the standing and character of those whose names are included. Sometimes, in the process of removal, by

¹ "Fit men not bearing office in any church, but giving themselves to the work of preaching, have always been recognized among us as ministers of the word. The ministry, therefore, includes all who are called of God to preach the gospel and are set apart to that work by ordination."—*Boston Platform*, Part 18: Chap. I, 1.

his own neglect to notify the proper person in his state, a good man's name is omitted temporarily, and sometimes, by the neglect or assumption of some local official, a name remains which should have been dropped. It is, however, a convenient and most useful directory.

Whether ministerial standing be in an association of ministers or in a conference of churches, a minister to be in good standing should unite with the appropriate body of the vicinity in which his residence and work are located. A minister belonging to a distant association is, like a non-resident church member, in an abnormal relation for which there should be some unusual reason. He should take a letter of transfer to the ministerial or ecclesiastical body within whose bounds he is to reside, or, if for extraordinary reasons he cannot do so, he should write annually to the scribe of the body of which he is a member.

Neither a local body composed of ministers or of churches has any right to discipline or power to exclude from the ministry any one not a member of that body. It may refuse its own fellowship, but if such minister is a member of some distant body, and an association or conference within which he resides has cause of complaint against him, it should be made to the body of which he is a member and which alone has the right not only to refuse its own fellowship, but to advise other similar bodies to unite with it in such refusal.

**A Resident
Membership**

**A Non-
resident**

As to the conditions of this standing and its certification or loss, the matter may perhaps be made most clear by separating the elements in which good standing consists :—

How Lost 1. As an individual, the minister is a member of a local church like other men, and is responsible to it for his consistent living. So far as this is concerned he may lose his standing as a church member by the action of the church of which he is a member. It is an ancient usage, and advisable in most cases, that, in dealing with a ministerial member, a church should call in the advice of the neighboring churches in a mutual council, to aid it in its conclusion. If the council should advise the removal of the minister from his membership in the church, it could also advise the churches no longer to regard him as a minister.

2. As a member of a profession, he has been received into a ministerial association, which may terminate his membership by vote. The vote should state the reason for the action, on which the effect of the action would depend. If simply for long continued absence, it would cast no reflection on his moral character, though it might on his conception of the requirements of good fellowship. The effect of the action of a ministerial association would, however, only affect his professional standing, though it might be conclusive of his ministry, if no further appeal were taken by him.

3. His standing as a minister of the Congregational denomination would be directly affected by the action

of an ecclesiastical body, as the local conference or state association of which he is a member. This, especially if communicated to other such bodies in the land, would directly discredit him; and unless he should appeal to an ecclesiastical council, it would terminate his ministerial career and remove him from the ministry of the denomination.

4. The ultimate appeal in all cases is to an ecclesiastical council, which alone can finally take away from a Congregational minister the standing which was conferred on him by a similar body.

It may be seen that at any stage of this proceeding, the action of a church, ministerial association, ecclesiastical conference or council, will be final, if concurred in, or not resisted, by the person affected thereby. It is seldom that the ultimate appeal is desired or necessary.

The expression "deposed from the ministry," though occasionally used, does not seem to be in accord with Congregational principles. On **Deposition** the belief that the Lord has called a man to the ministry, a Congregational council recognizes that call, and extends its fellowship to its ministry. All that it can properly do in the extremest case is to withdraw the recognition and fellowship which it has extended.

CHAPTER VIII

CALLING AND DISMISSING A PASTOR

THIS is a most important duty which comes to every church at intervals. The selection should be most carefully and prayerfully made and the whole process conducted in accordance with the dictates of experience.

The most foolish, and perhaps the easiest way, is to open the pulpit to a succession of candidates to be heard and compared, with the idea of selecting the best. This is usually disastrous in its process and in its result.

**Hearing
Candidates**

A foolish choice is often made of the man who preaches with the most ease and happens at the time to interest the people. If his antecedents are in such cases not carefully examined, a church depending simply on such candidating may secure or be secured by an unworthy man without character or record, who sooner or later will reveal himself and work great harm. Indeed, under the most favorable circumstances this process often defeats itself. Many of the best and most self-respecting ministers will not enter into any such competition. If three of the best preachers possible were to succeed each other in the same pulpit with a view to a call, the congregation would be sure to be divided between them, some preferring one and some another, when they could have heartily united upon either. Usually in such cases all three would

probably be dropped, and the church, dreading a repetition of its experience, unite hastily upon some one far inferior to any of those thus set aside.

The best way of proceeding is for the church to elect a committee to find a pastor, making it large enough to be representative, putting in it **Selection by Committee** the best and wisest men, and if possible, some one at least who knows men and has facilities for a somewhat wide correspondence. There will usually be a sufficient number of suggestions. Let this committee take advice from the most judicious men in the ministry and perhaps even more in the laity. There is a Board of Pastoral Supply in Boston, Massachusetts, and similar agencies in some other states, to which it is wise to apply for suggestions and for testimony as to men suitable to fill the vacancy. Let this committee first investigate the previous record of each person, as a student, or minister, going no further, if the result of the inquiry is not satisfactory. Let some of them at least hear him preach in his own pulpit, or in some other than their own, and, when they are thoroughly united, let them present his name to the people as their nominee, securing him to preach to them if possible. If the committee has been at all wise, there is every probability that its choice will be ratified by the church, unless new facts appear, or there is general disappointment at the last, which the committee will probably share.

To make this plan a success, a stated supply should be secured for the pulpit; otherwise, on various pleas

A Stated Supply of friendship and convenience, candidates will be introduced to the pulpit, and the church having voted not to listen to a procession of candidates will still be in the miseries and subject to the mischances of that lottery.

When there is probability of a substantial agreement, the committee should call a meeting of the church in the way prescribed by the by-laws, and then report in full, giving the church all possible information as to the past record and reputation of their nominee. If the vote to proceed to a call is substantially unanimous, the clerk should prepare a certified copy of the proceedings to be sent to the pastor elect, with a letter from the committee inviting him to the pastorate, and requesting him, if he shall accept the call, to fix a time for beginning his work, and to unite with the church in calling a council for his installation.

If there is an ecclesiastical society, the action of the church should be communicated to it, with the request for its concurrence, and that it fix the salary to be paid, the vacation to be allowed, etc. The church should always take the initiative in both calling and dismissing a pastor, and the action of the society should be to confirm, or to decline to confirm, the action of the church.

The steps to be taken in the calling of a council will be noted in another place.¹

The vote may be for substance as follows:—

VOTED: That this church extends a call to Rev.

¹ See pages 94, 102, 117.

A. B——— to become its pastor and teacher ; [that the clerk of the church be instructed to inform the society of this action] ; that a committee of three be appointed [to act with a committee to be appointed by the society, if that body shall concur], to convey this action to the pastor elect, and, if he shall accept, to arrange with him for calling a council for his [ordination and] installation.

It is wise to instruct the committee to insert in the call the following paragraph :—

“ It is understood and agreed that, if at any time either the church or the pastor shall be convinced that the pastoral relation thus established should
A Condition be terminated, three months’ notice shall be given [by vote of the church transmitted to the pastor by its clerk, or by letter from the pastor to the church], and the matter shall be referred to a mutual council for approval or advice.”

It is seldom, if ever, wise for a minister to accept a call which is not practically unanimous, and never if there is what might be called an organized opposition.

When the pastoral relation is to be terminated, if on account of dissatisfaction with the minister, great care should be taken that everything be
Dismissal of a Pastor done in a spirit of considerate kindness on both sides. Unless the cause be moral delinquency, the communication of the desire on the part of the church should be made so as to wound as little as possible. It is not pleasant at the best to be told that personal services are no longer desired, and

yet it must sometimes be done. Let it be done with a kind heart and tongue, after much prayer and with the good of the church as the only motive. Let those who must communicate such sad news put themselves in the place of him to whom it is to be told and consider how they would feel about it. It should be done frankly when necessary. It is a poor compliment to a man to suggest that he does not want to know the truth; only be sure that it is the truth and spoken in love.

The minister, too, should not be angry. He should keep resentful thoughts from his heart and sharp words from his lips. He should not emphasize the ingratitude of those for whom he has done so much; perhaps they have done and borne as much for him as they have received from him. Possibly he has not always been greatly interested in his own preaching, has had little inspiration in it, and yet wonders that those who have listened have not been fed or inspired. He may have been faithful and yet, if honest with himself, be compelled to acknowledge that he has not been successful.

If a council has been held at the installation, a council should be called for the dismissal of a pastor, that he may go with its expressed approbation of his ministry, which is necessary to his good standing. If that approbation is withheld, it is understood by the churches that it is for cause. If he has been settled without council, the church should by vote put on record its expression of respect and esteem. This may be his credential to other fields.

In cases,—they are rare ; we wish they were rarer,—where immoral or dishonest or disorderly conduct has made the ending of a pastorate imperative, it should be done firmly, with no false sentiment of sparing the evil-doer, and it should be so done that as far as possible the offender shall be prevented from repeating his wrong-doing and his injury in another place. It is not honorable to dismiss a minister or a church member for wickedness and leave him free to continue it and to be found out to their loss and injury by another people.

CHAPTER IX

THE ECCLESIASTICAL SOCIETY AND THE
INCORPORATE CHURCH

IN many places in New England the property of the churches is held and its financial affairs are managed by a body entirely distinct from the church, called the Ecclesiastical Society. This arrangement is a relic of the times when the church and the town were one, the town supporting the church by taxation and having a voice in electing its ministers. When the interests of the two became distinct, the ecclesiastical society took the place of the town, those not communicants in it thus continuing to have a vote in regard to the pastorate and all things for which money was required. This is not a normal nor desirable relation. In no club or other organization do those who are not full members expect to vote in deciding its affairs. The followers of Jesus Christ who have covenanted to walk together should select their leaders and teachers and manage the business of the church.

This double organization exists in various forms. Sometimes all (male) church members of voting age, together with such other like members of the parish as may be elected to the body, constitute the society: sometimes all who have contributed to the support of the church during the preceding year, according to the plan

**Various
Forms**

which may have been adopted. Sometimes in building a church, scrip has been issued to those who have contributed, for which deeds of pews have been given, and the church property and the rights of the ecclesiastical society have been vested in the holders of these deeds who are called the "Proprietors of the Meeting House." This is the worst of all plans, as the original proprietors naturally lessen in number by death or removal so that these matters come to be in the hands of a few survivors or of heirs inheriting the rights of their fathers, and the house of God may come to be in the hands of a small number of persons who may be even indifferent or hostile to its spiritual work. The evils of such an organization were most fully illustrated in the Unitarian controversy and separation.

In whatever form this secular body connected with the church exists, its relation to the church should be fully understood, and the method of its cooperation clearly defined.¹

Outside of New England such dual organizations are not often found, there having been no such historic cause. It is necessary that each body of **The Incorporated Church** believers should be in such relation to the Church state that it may hold property, determine its expenditures and assume pecuniary obligations. It must, in a word, become, or be associated with, a corporation for this purpose. It is possible and customary in all the states for churches as such to be

¹ See Rules for Relation of Church and Ecclesiastical Society, page 186.

organized and incorporated for these purposes under general laws. Within the past few years scores of churches in New England, which were organized long ago and which for years have been connected with an ecclesiastical society, have taken steps to become corporate bodies and to accept the property voluntarily made over to the church by the society. It is a step which ought to be taken wherever possible. Churches newly organized are almost without exception incorporated as such, holding their own property and managing their own finances.

When a church already organized desires to become an incorporated body it should pass and record a vote expressing that purpose. The law of the state applying to the matter should be carefully studied and observed, and advice and blanks procured from the proper officer. The call for a special meeting to incorporate should be signed by the clerk of the church and read or posted in accordance with its by-laws and the laws of the state, with which they must be made to agree.

At the time of the meeting, the clerk should call for the election of a temporary chairman and appoint tellers to collect and count the ballots. All the elections must be by actual ballot, not by instructing one person to cast a ballot, or by any other expedient for avoiding the plain meaning of that term. The chairman should read the call for the meeting and preside during the election of a temporary clerk, who in some states must then be sworn by a justice or notary

public and at once enter upon his duties. A vote should be taken to proceed to the business of incorporation under the laws which apply.

By-laws for the incorporated church should be adopted, article by article and then as a whole.

A moderator, treasurer and standing committee or trustees should be elected by ballot. Other officers should be elected as prescribed by the by-laws, the clerk being sworn; a creed, covenant and articles of faith should be adopted as though it were a new organization. Other appropriate business may be transacted.

A certificate of organization should be prepared or filled out and sworn to by a majority of trustees or standing committee to be filed with the proper state officer.

The records of the meeting should be signed and certified by the clerk.

CHAPTER X

ECCLESIASTICAL COUNCILS

A CHURCH of Jesus Christ may exist and be complete in itself without any relation to another church.

A Method of Fellowship It may be so isolated in position that it is impossible to maintain such relations. It may be so surrounded with alien and un-

godly influences that there is no other similar body with which it can be in fellowship. Such a church is an Independent, not a Congregational church. Fellowship between churches is maintained by various means of communication, by Councils, or by Associations (Conferences, Conventions); that is, by representative gatherings of churches called to advise and help in special cases, or organized to meet regularly for consultation and fellowship.

The Congregational use of the name Council is historically a gathering of neighboring churches called by

Definition and Name a local church to act with, or to give advice to it in any condition where that aid is needed and requested. A council is

thus called to advise or cooperate in a definite matter (*pro re nata*). The only exception to this use of the word Congregationally is in connection with the National Council, which in fact is a National Association or Conference of churches. The term used by our English brethren for their national gathering is The Congregational Union. Either of

these names would need less explanation than the one selected. But the nomenclature of Congregationalism is not very consistent and bears the impress of the independency of the churches which constitute the denomination.

The occasions for Ecclesiastical Councils and the party which may properly invite such a body are as follows:

I. A number of persons proposing to unite in the organization of a Congregational church may invite a number of neighboring churches (1) to aid in its organization, or (2) having already completed the organization, to receive it into fellowship.¹

**When to
be Called**

II. Councils may be called by a church: ²

(1) For the ordination of a person to the ministry, either with or without installation into the pastoral office, or to any other general or special work which may be an appropriate part of the work of a minister.

¹ "When a company of believers purpose to gather together into church fellowship, it is requisite for their safer proceeding, and the maintaining of the communion of churches, that they signify their intent unto the neighboring churches, walking according unto the order of the gospel, and desire their presence, and help, and right hand of fellowship, which they ought readily to give unto them, when there is no just cause to except against their proceedings."—*Cambridge Platform*.

² "A council is to be called only by a church, with two exceptions to be named hereafter, or by an aggrieved member or members in a church which has unreasonably refused a council, or by a competent number of believers intending to be gathered into a church."—*Platform 1865*.

(2) For the installation of a minister, who has been previously ordained, as pastor of a particular church. It is necessary to the good standing of a minister thus installed that at the close of his pastorate he should be dismissed with the concurrence of a council.

(3) To advise a church asking for such advice, (*a*) where some offense by a member is alleged, and both the member and the church desire advice before the church shall take action; (*b*) where its peace is disturbed by internal dissensions, or (*c*) its life is threatened by outward conditions.

(4) To hear charges against a pastor or other ordained minister in a church, which would, if proved, make it proper that he be deposed from the ministry and thus lose the fellowship of the churches as a minister of the gospel.

(5) To hear complaint by any one church that another particular church has, after admonition, persisted in offenses as to faith and practice which, if true, should affect the relation of the church of which complaint is made to the body of churches with which it is connected.

III. Councils may be called by a church and a member or members (mutual councils), or in certain specified conditions by either party alone (*ex parte* councils). (*a*) When a member of the church has by its action wrongfully been deprived of regular standing in its membership, or (*b*) has been refused by it a letter of dismission and recommendation, and thereby been deprived of communion with other churches, a

mutual council should ordinarily be called at his request by the church and himself. If the church refuses to join with him in such a council, he may call an *ex parte* council in view of the alleged injustice and loss of fellowship. Such a council should be impartially selected, the parties if possible agreeing upon a common list, otherwise each selecting one-half the number. In any case unprejudiced persons should compose this arbitrating council. The first act of an *ex parte* council should be to offer itself as a mutual council to the party not participating in its call. Such a council can advise the church, and if it deems it just recommend the reception by any other church of the person which it judges to have been improperly denied a letter.

A council is not the proper body to license or approve a candidate for the ministry, because this is not an ecclesiastical act, but only a nomination, as a basis for ecclesiastical action, and because a license is given for a limited period to be renewed or not by the body giving it, and a council is not a continuous body and so cannot issue or refuse such a renewal.

**Not for
Licensure**

A council should be composed of a moderate number of Congregational churches, usually contiguous, each represented by its pastor and one or more delegates as may be set forth in the invitation.¹ Occasionally a distant church

**Composed
Of Churches**

¹ "The churches invited to assist in a council are represented by messengers or delegates chosen by them for the particular

is invited, that is, one with which the pastor to be ordained has been connected, but these should be few and decidedly in the minority, except where local prejudices are strong, when a council drawn from a wider circle may be needed.

A council is primarily composed of the representatives of churches. Frequently a few individuals are invited in addition because of their special experience or peculiar relations. The presence of individuals who represent no church may be often a convenience and may expedite the matters in hand and secure wise action, but the number should be small and they should be invited not merely as a compliment, but because they may aid in reaching a wise result. In home missionary fields it is of course proper that the superintendents of missionary societies who have studied and developed the fields and who know the people and their conditions, should be members of councils; in reality they represent the whole body of churches as well as the missionary body which is to help sustain the pastor.

The church calling the council should never invite itself to be represented either by delegates or appoint in-

occasion. By ancient usage,¹ the pastor of a church, having been duly recognized as its presiding elder or bishop, is always expected to be one of its messengers; and the letters convening the council invite each church to be represented by its pastor and delegate. Yet, in the council, when convened, there is no distinction of authority between pastors and other delegates."—*Boston Platform, 1865, Part III, Chap. 21 : 2.*

¹ See note on page 113.

**The Church
Inviting not
on the Coun-
cil**

dividual members to participate in the deliberations. Calling a council implies either that the church has taken action on which it desires the approval of neighboring churches, or that it submits a matter on which its course is undecided for their advice. Its case is presented through its committee. It cannot properly be on the advice-giving body too. The party who brings even a friendly suit before a court is never on the jury.

A council should never be selected of those only who are expected to take certain desired action. Such

**Impartial in
Selecting**

a course invalidates all its action and influence. Not endorsement but advice should be sought from those who are wise and unprejudiced, and who will seek to do only what is right and for the good of all. A body selected to accomplish a certain fixed end is always ill-chosen and ineffective, and its advice will deservedly have little if any weight with the churches at large. The council is an expression of fellowship as well as an appeal for advice, and those giving the invitation should bear this in mind. Especially in councils called for dismissal of pastors, care should be taken not to exclude the nearest churches, or those with which the relations of the retiring pastor have not been agreeable. Papers from a dismissing council are of little value unless it has been impartially called and none have been excluded who might object to giving words of commendation.

It is not proper to call churches or ministers of

other denominations on a Congregational council, since it relates to Congregational fellow-
Churches or ship. Especially is this inappropriate in
Ministers of the ordination or installation of a minis-
other Denom- ter who is, on his papers and his exami-
inations nation, to be received into the fellowship of certain churches thus bound together and responsible for each other. It certainly is not proper that those outside should aid in determining to what churches or ministers a denomination in which they have neither rights nor responsibilities should extend its fellowship. If a church desires to invite a minister of another denomination to take part in the ordaining service, that desire should be expressed in a note appended to the list of churches accompanying the letter missive. He should not be invited to participate in the advisory action of the council.

A council is called by what is termed a Letter Missive. The letter missive calling for a council and addressed to the churches should specify, (1) the exact business to be submitted to the council, and (2) the exact list of churches and individuals invited. This letter is the charter under which the council meets and acts. The churches invited have no right to take action or give advice except in regard to the matters thus specified, nor to add in any way, even by the election of an honorary member, to the list of those invited and whom the churches have by vote accepted in acting upon the invitation to meet; nor has the church which issued it a right to change the letter or the list of invited churches and indi-

viduals without notifying all who have been invited of the change.

Occasionally a church has sent out a letter missive for a service of installation in which it has not distinctly asked the council to satisfy itself by examination in regard to the matters involved before voting to cooperate. If the invited churches believe that they are not asked to examine the case before them and give their advice and assistance with freedom, they should decline the invitation; it would not be to a Congregational council. If, however, as has usually been the case, the inviting church does not intend to limit the churches so that their only possible action is that of acquiescence, and on the clear understanding that a Congregational council can only be asked to advise and to act its free pleasure, the mere variation in the form of the invitation should not invalidate the call or at all affect the proceedings of the council. The letter ought, however, expressly to submit the matters involved for examination, and ask for advice and cooperation. If that is not desired, a council should not be called, or, if called, the invitation should be declined. It is too late, however, to find fault with the letter after accepting the invitation which it contains.

It is the common and wise rule that, in deciding whether a quorum is present, the churches represented are alone counted and that the council convened is regarded as competent to proceed with business only when a majority of the churches invited is present. If individuals not repre-

senting churches are counted in making up a quorum, each person is made equal to a church or at least to half of a church.

Sometimes the failure to secure a quorum, where distances are great and churches far apart, is embarrassing. It has been suggested that where this is liable to occur, a clause like this may be added to the letter missive: "And we respectfully request that you would pass a vote agreeing that such churches as may be present in council, under this invitation,—a quorum being present, if not in person, by the force of such votes duly received,—may be authorized to proceed with the work for which the council is called; and that you will transmit this vote at once to our church."

The same relief may be had by following the suggestion of the Boston Platform:—"If a majority of the churches invited be not represented, those present ought not to proceed as a council, unless the party inviting consents."

When the hour has arrived, the pastor who has been longest in his charge, or some other who has been requested to do so, should call the

Order of Procedure council to order and read the letter missive. He should then ask for the nomination of a temporary scribe. If but one person is nominated, he may be elected by a *viva voce* vote and will then take the chair. After his election the roll of churches should be called to determine simply whether the required majority of the churches invited is rep-

resented. If this is found to be the fact, a moderator should be elected and a permanent scribe. The moderator should then either himself lead in a prayer for divine guidance or call upon some brother to do so. Early in the session the roll of the council should be made up by the scribe, the pastors and delegates handing to him their names and those of the churches which they represent in writing. Full statements of the matters to be brought before the council in accordance with the letter missive should then be made.

A council¹ called to advise should take pains to have the whole case put clearly before it. Especially in case of charges which affect the reputation and standing of ministerial or lay brethren, **Equity to be Sought** great care should be taken to get at the facts and to exclude prejudice and gossip. The strict rules of evidence cannot be applied as in a court of law, but nothing that is not evidence should be admitted. A council is a board of arbitration, seeking equity, not mere legal justice. Rights are not as important as right. The text for such a body should be, "to do justly, to love kindness and to walk humbly with God." All testimony should be heard in open council, or, at least, in the presence and hearing of the parties affected by it.

In all cases, after a council has heard all the facts, the vote is passed "that the council be by itself," and

¹ For the proper proceedings in a council called to ordain or install or to dismiss a pastor, see Chapter XI.

Council by Itself then, away from the audience, like any other jury, it may discuss the matters before it, take vote as to its decision and carry on the case to a conclusion. When its decision is reached, if it needs to be committed to writing, a committee is appointed to draw up the result. This is amended if need be and finally adopted by the council.

The open session is then resumed and the Result of Council is read to the assembled congregation. As soon as a council has completed the business, or expressed in the result its advice on the matter which was submitted to it in the letter missive, it should by vote dissolve. It does not adjourn, which naturally suggests that it is to meet again at some other time or place. It may take recess when needed. A council can only be kept alive by adjourning to a certain time and place, to be assembled at the call of certain officers for the completion of business on which it is not prepared to take final action at the time of its first session.

Result and Dissolution

In councils to ordain, or install, the council proceeds with, or declines to do, what it has been asked to do. But a council for advice performs no definite act. It only gives fraternal advice. This in all cases should be presented to the church for its acceptance by vote through the committee instructed to call the council. If the advice is wise, and the acceptance is hearty, the doubts will usually be cleared away and the troubles removed. But it is all incomplete without such a vote.

After a Council

No church is, however, bound to accept the advice even for which it has asked. The arbitration is not accompanied with a promise to accept the result. The rejection of the advice does not even destroy fellowship with the advising churches. It does, however, endanger it, and if the course of the church in and after rejecting the advice is irregular and unwise, it may lead to the practical withdrawal of fellowship. Advice according to Congregational principles has just so much force "as there is force in the reason of it;" and when it commends itself as reasonable to the great body of churches, the one church which disregards it is without the sympathy, and more and more without the cooperation of its neighbors. Usually this is a sufficient corrective, and gradually the self-willed body, either through changes in its constituency or through coming to a better mind, will return to the confidence of the other churches and their practical fellowship.

The system of advice by councils in cases of differences of opinion is in no sense an appeal to a court or a court of appeals. It is not going to law, either civil or ecclesiastical, with one another; it is rather a system of arbitration or reference toward which, in individual, corporate and national affairs the civilized and Christian world is rapidly tending. Appeals to law, even to an ecclesiastical judicature or self-styled "Court of Jesus Christ," are out of place and out of character in the Christian household. Fraternal reference is the wise and Christian resort in cases of difference, and this

**Accepting
the Advice**

**Not a
Court**

the Congregational council uses. Ecclesiastical trials and appeals from lower to higher courts often tend to make local troubles bitter and national.

That the result of a council has, however, an important standing in the civil courts appears from the following statement by a high authority :

Standing in Civil Courts —“The result of a council is in many cases necessarily only advisory, and a church may decline to act in accordance with it without incurring censure, but in some cases the result is necessarily conclusive. Thus, a council called to act upon the proposed ordination of a minister, and proceeding to ordain him, of course determines the question. A council called with power to declare the dissolution of a pastoral relation can decide imperatively, but such power is seldom given. The courts in Massachusetts, and also in some other states, have recognized the existence of councils as a part of our polity, and have declared that when a council is impartially selected, and proceeds according to the ordinary principles of fairness, either party accepting the result of such council will be sustained by law in cases within the cognizance of law.”¹

¹ Rev. Alonzo H. Quint, D. D., in “Congregationalists in America,” by A. E. Dunning, D. D., page 497.

NOTE. — A pastor properly to represent his church should be a member of it and so a delegate from it. A pastor is only such by the election and recognition of his church. Appointment by a Home Missionary Society does not make one a pastor. A supply, and especially a minister belonging to another denomination, is not a pastor, and so is not included in the invitation.

CHAPTER XI

COUNCILS FOR ORDINATION AND
INSTALLATION

THE Council for Ordination or its equivalent is still in almost universal use. The Boston Ordination Platform (1865) defines the ministry as "all who are called of God to preach the gospel, and are set apart to that work by ordination."

Ordination is the recognition of a divine call and an acceptance by a church or group of churches of the man ordained as a minister of Christ.

Its Meaning To induct a man into the ministry is regarded as a sacred function and one which should be surrounded with all practicable safeguards. Any church, according to Congregational principles, has authority to ordain one of its own number as its pastor or minister, but this ordination does not make him a minister of the denomination, nor secure his admission to its roll of ministers or to its fellowship as such. Ordination expressed by the ordaining prayer with the laying on of hands is "the door to the ministry." With this is coupled "the right hand of fellowship," which is usually given at a public service and in connection with ordination. The first sets him apart as a minister called of God, the second receives him as a Congregational minister. No man is regarded as a minister who has not been ordained by some ecclesiastical body representing the

churches ; if of our own body, by a Congregational council ; if from some other denomination, according to its usages.

It is of consequence to other churches in fellowship that the ministry in a neighbor church be filled by a man of good character and discretion, and having sound views of religious truth and duty. Among these churches thus in fellowship it early grew to be the custom to consult together in this as in other important crises in the history of a particular church. Neighboring churches were and are therefore invited to satisfy themselves that the church has chosen a man worthy both in life and belief to be received into this fellowship. Thus councils for ordination and installation came into being.

A candidate for ordination should be prepared to present to the council through its scribe (1) a certificate of membership in a Congregational church, or a letter of dismissal to the church over which he is to be ordained ; (2) papers showing his graduation from a college and theological seminary of good standing. In lieu of this last there should be a statement satisfactory to the council as to such preparation as he has made to fit him to be a teacher and preacher.

In regard to the value of Councils for Installation ¹

¹“ *Resolved*, (3) That this National Council commends to the churches, in accordance with our ancient usage, the importance of properly called ecclesiastical councils, ordinarily selected from the vicinage, and especially the great importance

of those already ordained as pastors of particular churches, there has grown up a difference of usage which must result either from a misuse of the council or from a difference of opinion as to its need and function.

According to the Year Book there were, January 1st, 1903, 4,393 churches with pastors. Of these only 819 were with pastors installed by council, that is, only eighteen per cent of the whole number. Of the 1,311 in the New England states, 506 were installed after the old pattern, a little less than thirty-nine per cent, while of the larger states in the West the percentage is from five to twenty-five per cent. It is interesting to trace this matter back for nearly fifty years. In 1857, out of 1,768 churches 947 had pastors installed by council, or fifty-four per cent. The percentage was lessened year by year until 1880, when of 2,800 churches 881 had pastors installed by council. Thus at this half-way point from our earliest complete denominational statistics in 1857 the percentage had decreased from fifty-four per cent to thirty per cent. Since then it has dropped to eighteen per cent.

The reasons for this falling away are, we think, (1) an abuse of the examination by which reputable men who have served the churches have been questioned as though under suspicion and not in a fraternal spirit. This has possi-

of the installation of ministers to the pastorate by councils, when it is practicable, as conducive to the purity of the ministry and the prosperity of the churches."—*Chicago*, 1886.

bly deterred ministers from insisting on councils of installation. (2) Meanwhile the churches have had some reason for apprehension on their part. By the old usage and by the decisions of courts, a minister installed without limit of time or provision for termination of relation has a claim upon the church or society for salary promised him annually until he shall be convicted either of immorality, neglect of duty, or material change of beliefs. But these are not by any means the only reasons which may lead a church to desire a change of pastors. One may be eminently unsuccessful, although he is guilty of none of these things, and for the good and growth of the church should leave it. Some prominent instances have occurred within the past few years where pastors have successfully resisted all efforts to displace them until really bought off. It is not strange that intelligent churches should hesitate to put their necks under this yoke of bondage. They therefore settle their pastor without a council. But this omission is by no means necessary in order to escape this trouble or danger. Churches and ministers are insisting in these days on putting a provision into the call by which, on thirty days' or three months' notice from either pastor or church and with approval of an ecclesiastical council, the pastoral relation may be terminated.¹ This is simple and safe for both parties. (3) But probably more effective than either the dislike of an inquisitorial examination on the part of the minister, or the fear of being permanently saddled with an inefficient or un-

¹ See page 94.

welcome pastor, is the growing instability of the pastorate. This is marked both in the East and West. Restlessness is a national if not an ecumenical condition. The average period of settlement in our churches is said to be not more than four years, in the newer states much less than that, and it seems frivolous to have solemn services of induction into relations, as though they were to be lasting, which are probably to be disturbed in a few months, or in a very few years. What for a lifelong service seemed a solemn and appropriate induction to office, seems almost irreverent when the shortness of its probable duration is considered.

A candidate for installation should be prepared to present to the council, through its scribe, (1) a certificate of his membership in a Congregational church, or a letter of dismissal to the church over which he is to be installed; (2) a certified copy of the result of the council at which he was dismissed from his preceding charge, if such council was held; (3) a certified copy of any resolutions passed by the church last served, and (4) a certificate of his membership in an ecclesiastical conference or ministerial association.

The records of the action of the church (and society if there be one) should also be presented through the clerk (or clerks) and the letter of acceptance of the pastor elect read by the scribe of the council. If the papers are satisfactory, it is proper to vote to proceed to the examination of the candidate on his religious experience,

**Church
Records**

his motives for entering and prosecuting the ministry and a statement of his religious beliefs. This may be written or oral, or wholly in answer to questions, as the candidate may prefer, any member of the council being free to question.

At the close of this exercise, a motion to "suspend the examination" and "that the council be by itself" is in order. It is not proper at this time for the mover to express either his satisfaction or disapproval of the candidate or of his statement. The roll may be called and each member may vote to approve or not to approve the examination, or it may be decided by a general vote. In case the examination is sustained, the public services are held at a convenient hour, as previously arranged by the church, carrying out a program which has usually been more or less fully prepared by the candidate and church and accepted by the council, with or without modification.

A matter which should be carefully guarded is the way of receiving ministers from other denominations into the pastorates of our churches. We recognize fully the validity of ordination in any other evangelical body, not to some minor office, as to the diaconate in the Methodist Episcopal Church, but to the full ministry and its privileges; but a ministerial position is not transferable to another denomination by the sole volition and action of the minister. Ordination is to an office in one denomination, not in all. Nor is a min-

ister ordained elsewhere made a Congregational minister by transferring his membership to a Congregational church. That simply transfers his private membership, not his ministerial office. Nor is joining a ministerial association enough. Indeed, he must be a Congregational minister before he is eligible to membership in a Congregational ministerial or ecclesiastical body. That which can bring him into an orderly place in the ranks of the Congregational ministry is, in addition to these two steps, reception by the Congregational churches, most properly represented in a council called for the purpose, or as organized into a local association or conferences of churches. But it must be an organization of churches, and their action should be accompanied by some public service of reception and the formal though hearty giving of the right hand of fellowship.

Councils of Recognition are suggested and are in use as substitutes for the historic installing council. This is an *ex post facto* council, convened, not **Recognition** to constitute a relation, but to add its approval to one already existing. If this is only a form of welcome (and in some cases it is) to a newly arrived minister, it should not be called a council, and is of no particular consequence except as an expression of kindly feeling. If it involves an examination of the pastor as to his ministerial standing, as to his religious beliefs and the purpose of his work, with freedom to give or withhold the fellowship of the churches represented, it is in effect an installing council, except possibly as regards his legal relations to the

church. It sustains the same relation to the installing council that exists between the two forms of council, (1) to aid in organizing a Congregational church, or (2) to recognize and receive it into fellowship on approval of its basis of doctrine and polity.

A Council to Dismiss a pastor is the counterpart of one called to install, and properly is held where an installing council has preceded. After being duly organized, the letter of resignation of the pastor and the action of the church should be read from its records by the clerk of the church. It is customary for the council in its result to express its approval of the ministry to be terminated, if it can conscientiously do so, and also its sympathy with the church and its good wishes for its future. A withholding of such a fraternal expression, especially toward the retiring pastor, implies a reason for silence and is significant.

The neglect of the use of the Congregational council except for ordination is not a new thing. Mere protest does not cure it; to show that the principles of Congregationalism demand it does not stop the tendency. Apparently Congregationalism must adjust itself to the change. How can it be done? It can be done only by transferring some at least of the duties formerly devolving on the council to some other ecclesiastical body, representing the churches, not the ministry alone. The local conference or association of churches is the only body to which the transfer can be made. It

has the advantage over the council that it has a continued existence and responsibility as a body for what it does or has done in the past, the *pro re nata* council being always recognized as the last appeal. This may seem to some to be identical with the Consociationism of Connecticut, which was too much allied to Presbyterianism to be permanently allowed, and which constituted a standing council to which all matters must be referred and from which there was no appeal. But there is just this difference, that while the conference may take the place and exercise the functions of a council, there is always recognized the right of appeal from its advice and decision to a *pro re nata* council.

A council is naturally made up of the churches of the local conference composed of the churches of the vicinage, of which the church is a member; the question being generally what churches to add to these which form the natural basis of fellowship. By a transfer to the conference many questions to be referred to such a body could be deferred or anticipated a little while to fit the regular semi-annual time of meeting. The conference then, if so authorized by the churches composing it, could properly act in the licensure of candidates and in place of a council in the ordination and installation of ministers, and could be the custodian of ministerial standing and do much which a council has been accustomed to do. The spread of Congregationalism over a continent makes the council, which has no permanent existence or records, more difficult, and possibly less

successful than formerly, and also makes the local body, which has continuance, of more importance in the denominational doings.

CHAPTER XII

ECCLESIASTICAL ORGANIZATIONS

LOCAL Conferences,¹ consisting of pastoral and other delegates from the churches, and covering about the same limits as the ministerial associations, came into being gradually and naturally during the last century, the earliest being in Massachusetts in 1821, and are now quite universal. They are composed of neighborhood groups of churches which have common interests and problems, and which meet usually twice a year for fellowship and to confer and pray together. They have no authority over the churches of which they are composed and entertain no appeals from churches, or councils, or aggrieved individuals. The condition of the churches and their various activities or needs are frequently reported, and addresses made and discussions held on questions of interest relating to the life of the churches and the work which they have to accomplish. In many of the states membership in some local conference is the condition of enrolment in the State Minutes and the Year Book list of Congregational churches. Their representation in the National Council by delegates is larger than that from any other source.

A church, to be in good Congregational standing, whether it has been received by the act of a council or not, should unite with the conference, within the bounds of which it is located, of which it thus becomes a member. Its

¹ Often called Associations in the West.

adopted creed, form of admission to the church and its Congregational organization should be examined and declared satisfactory to the body receiving it. It thus acquires the rights of membership and subjects itself to the rules of this body, which may withdraw its fellowship for cause. In all such cases the rights of the individual church should be guarded carefully. It should know fully the charges made against it and have full opportunity of meeting them. It should be dealt with fraternally, not judicially. It has the right of appeal to a council of churches. This was called in the Cambridge Platform the third way of communion, of which the first step was admonition, leading, if necessary, to withdrawal of communion. This name suggests that the purpose of it was not to terminate but to perpetuate fellowship, if possible.

How far the relation of a church to the local association determines its relation to the whole denomination is still a question. It cannot be represented in the National Council except through the local conference or state association. It has been the custom to report the name of a church not thus associated for insertion in the Year Book starred to indicate that it is not in a local body.

In all the discussions in the National Council as to ministerial standing, it has been asserted that its proper **Relation to** keeping should be in bodies which represent the churches rather than in ministerial **Ministerial** associations, voluntarily formed and with **Standing** varying regulations. Thus the Council of 1886 gave special advice to these state and local ecclesiastical or-

ganizations "to consider such modification of their constitutions as will make them to become responsible for the ministerial standing of ministers within their bounds, in harmony with the principle that the churches of any locality decide upon their own fellowship." This recommendation has been heeded in New Hampshire, but not to any considerable extent in Massachusetts or the other New England states. It recognizes the weakness and inconsistency of the present general practice in New England and looks toward the removal of the responsibility for ministerial standing from the ministerial to an ecclesiastical body, that is, one composed of representatives of the churches, which are in Congregationalism the ultimate authority.¹

The present system of state organization of churches began with the General Conference of Maine in 1826. **State Asso-** The other New England states fell into **ciations** or line, and in the states where **Confer-** Congregationalism is of more recent origin this has been the plan from the beginning. Almost every state and territory in which there are half a dozen churches is represented in its own or in some neighboring state organization. In forty-four states these are called Associations, in seven Conferences, and in three Conventions. It would be convenient if the names could be brought into harmony. We follow the usage of the majority.

These like all other permanent representative bodies

¹ For further discussion of ministerial standing, see Chapter vii, pages 84-90.

in Congregationalism have no legislative or judicial powers. They discuss and may give general advice, and their advice has a claim for consideration in proportion to the character of those who give it, to the thoroughness of the discussion and the wisdom of the conclusions. The state as well as the local bodies are represented in the National Council.

A minister, to have standing in a state body, should be a member of a Congregational church and of a local conference of churches or a Congregational ministerial association in the state.

One whose membership is in one such organization can have no rights in a second. A church also, to have the right to be represented in a state organization, must be a member of some local conference within its bounds.

In some of the smaller states, the state association acts also as a local conference in regard to the reception of churches and ministers and their standing.

Neither a state nor local body has authority over a minister or church not a member of it by his or its own voluntary act. If it deems that it is necessary to proceed against a church or minister in this position, it should communicate with the body in which the membership inheres. It may of course decline to receive any applicant to its fellowship, being responsible for such action to the body whose letter of dismissal and commendation is thus discredited.

It is through the State Association that the list of churches to appear on the denominational roll is pre-

pared for the Year Book. The names of the churches, with their pastors, clerks and Sunday-school superintendents, and the statistics called for by the National Council are gathered by the statistical secretary of each state from the corresponding official in each local conference and sent to the secretary of the National Council, who is the official publisher of the Year Book. In some states of New England the list of ministers not serving churches is sent by the scribe of the Ministerial Association. Every such minister, if he values his position on the roll, should see that the local officer is annually informed of his address.

The only body authorized to drop the name of a minister or of a church from the state minutes, and so from the Congregational Year Book, is an Association or Conference. It is from the reports of these bodies that the list in the Year Book is made up in final form for the compiler. A church is received by vote of a Conference or Association into its membership. It can only be deprived of its membership by a similar process. No scribe or registrar has the right to drop the name of any church, even if he knows it to have been dead for years, without authority to do so by vote of the body into whose fellowship it was received by vote. Every Conference should, and many do, appoint a standing committee on membership through which all applications for admission are made for recommendation to the Conference. To the same committee might well be entrusted the duty of ex-

amining the roll of churches annually, and of recommending to drop the name of any church which has permanently ceased to exist, but the vote to drop must be by the body to which it belongs.

The same rule should apply in the case of ministers. The Conference of Churches or Ministerial Association, to the membership of which he was elected by vote, should be the only body through which he can be deprived of that membership and that by vote. A committee should be appointed to examine the roll and make recommendation to the Association or Conference, but with no other powers, and the body should by vote decide upon the omission of any name.

There have been times when it has seemed wise and necessary for all the Congregational churches of the land to meet to discuss grave crises in their history or to plan to meet new opportunities. When the Congregational churches were few in number and were all located on or near the Atlantic coast, it was not difficult, at least so far as distance was concerned, to assemble all the churches to discuss grave crises in their history or to plan to meet new opportunities. Two such gatherings, their occasion and results, held at Cambridge, 1637 and 1646, are noticed briefly in the historical sketch.¹

For more than two hundred years there was no such general gathering. The number of Congregational churches had increased from forty-six to about sixteen hundred, and the territory had been extended west to Minnesota,

The
National
Council

The
Albany
Convention

¹ Chapter III, pages 46, 47.

Nebraska and Kansas, with a very few churches even on the Pacific coast. The occasion of the Albany Convention was to consider the working of the Plan of Union with the Presbyterians and the Extension of Congregational Missionary Work into the rapidly opening West. The General Association of New York invited every Congregational church in the United States that felt so disposed to send its pastor and a delegate. Four hundred and sixty-three such pastors and delegates gathered in Albany, New York, October 5, 1852. This was the third national gathering of Congregational churches. The Plan of Union with the Presbyterians was by unanimous vote given up, a special fund of \$50,000 was proposed to aid in building meeting-houses in the West, and the bond between Eastern and Western Congregationalists was materially strengthened. The beginning of the publication of our national statistics dates from this meeting, and a great impulse was given to denominational consciousness and growth in many ways.

The fourth general gathering of the Congregational churches and the first calling itself a National Council met at Boston, June 14, 1865. The
The Boston Council proposition for it came from a convention of the Congregational churches of the Northwest and was suggested through the General Association of Illinois to the other state associations, which appointed committees by which the plan for this national gathering was perfected. This was a representative body composed of delegates from local associations or conferences proportioned to the number

of churches in each. The issue of this council found expression in the Boston Platform published in 1872, and the Burial Hill Declaration of Faith.

It was on the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the landing of the Mayflower that, at a meeting of delegates from the State Associations or Conferences held in the Congregational Library at Boston, December 21, 1870, it was unanimously 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." This was done at Oberlin, November 15, 1871. Its purpose and limitations were thus expressed:—

"The Congregational churches of the United States, by elders and messengers assembled, do now associate themselves in National Council:
Purpose and Limitations "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 the 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."

It was agreed that the churches should meet in National Council every third year and in special session whenever any five of the general associations should so request.

The membership of each National Council is made up as follows: The churches shall be represented, at each session, by delegates, either ministers or laymen, appointed in number and manner as follows:—

1. The churches, assembled in their local organizations, 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 organization, they may, at their option, appoint the delegates in such body, instead of in local organizations, but in the above ratio of churches so united. 2. In addition to the above, the churches united in state organizations appoint by such body one delegate, and one for each ten thousand communicants in their fellowship, and one for a major fraction thereof;

**Representa-
tion**

3. It being recommended that the number of delegates be, in all cases, divided between ministers and laymen, as nearly equally as is practicable. Each state or local organization may provide in its own way for filling vacancies in its delegation. 4. Such Congregational societies for Christian work as may be recognized by this Council, and the faculties of Congregational theological seminaries and colleges, may be represented by one delegate each.¹

At the first meeting of the National Council in 1871, the following "declaration of the unity of the church" was adopted as expressing the mind of the Congregational churches toward "all the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ."

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.

Declaration of Unity 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 purpose to cooperate 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 grow-

¹ Constitution of National Council, Art. II.

ing unity of counsel 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 the 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 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 cooperation 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.

At its meeting in Minneapolis in 1892 the following resolution was unanimously passed:—

Resolved, That affiliation with our denomination, of churches not now upon our roll, should be welcomed
Relation upon the basis of the common evangelical
to other faith, substantial Congregational polity,
Churches and free communion of Christians, without regard to forms or minor differences."

In practical furtherance of the principles thus declared, there has been for years a committee appointed by the National Council on "Comity, Federation and Unity." Proposals for interdenominational comity have been made to all the denominations with which we come in contact in our missionary work. These have been fraternally responded to by the Home Missionary organizations of the Presbyterian and the Reformed churches, with agreements not to enter upon ground sufficiently occupied by each other and for friendly reference of all local difficulties which might arise. The federation of churches in particular cities and towns has been promoted, and in some localities secured, so that the organization and location of new churches may be after advisement and with the consent of all the evangelical churches. Correspondence and conference have been held by the Council's Committee with other denominations, and in some instances overtures made looking toward some form of organic unity with those whose faith and polity resembles our own. At the time of this writing, two other denominations besides our own have appointed committees which have issued a joint communication to their respective bodies recommending a union of these denominations in a General Council.

Eleven triennial sessions of this body have been held in different cities from Portland, Oregon, to Portland, Maine. There were those who at its organization feared lest it should take from the freedom of the churches and lead to

Its Value

something like legislative power, but it has been wisely guided and restrained. It has been a most valuable means of expressing and promoting fellowship in the widely scattered churches of our order. It has discussed questions vital to our polity. It has given advice, sometimes wise and sometimes not so well considered, which has been followed or not as it has commended itself to the churches. It has not even been obliged to be always consistent with itself or the precedents which it has created. It has helped greatly in the solution of important questions and shown that union is possible without uniformity. It will in the future be increasingly the rallying place and unifying power of the denomination.

The National Council annually issues the Year Book, giving the list and statistics of the Congregational churches of the United States and of the **Year Book** ministers and licentiates serving them ; also the organization of the State and national bodies, and of the national missionary societies and theological seminaries, with brief but comprehensive biographical notices of deceased ministers, and records of the ministerial ordinations, installations and dismissions of the year.

In 1891 the first *International Congregational Council* was held in London, England, made up of delegates from all parts of the **The International Council** world. It included one hundred delegates from the British Islands, one hundred from the United States, and one hundred from all

other countries. Although without authority over the churches, it manifested the power of unity residing in the fellowship which acknowledges "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," and its declarations of opinion were received with profound respect. A second International Council was held in the United States in the year 1899. It was somewhat larger than its predecessor and was a gathering of great intellectual and spiritual power. A provisional committee was appointed to prepare for another to be the third in a series of such international councils to be "held periodically at intervals, of from five to ten years as may from time to time appear desirable."

We have seen the gradual growth of Congregational fellowship; like the natural powers of crystallization, it has progressed regularly as the elements to furnish its growth and the appropriate conditions have appeared. First the churches at Plymouth and Salem, representing the two colonies with their contrasted principles of Separatism and Puritanism, advised and assisted each other informally. Then, as churches of like character came to be, the habit grew of recognizing the need of each other's support and advice, with the system of Ecclesiastical Councils. Then the importance of stated gatherings for mutual encouragement and for planning common work was felt and led to conferences of neighboring churches. From these similar state gatherings grew, formed of representatives of either the local conferences or of the churches of which they were composed. With the spread of

Congregational churches over the length of the United States and the breadth of the Continent, the necessity of some more general meeting, to be held at longer intervals, led to the National Council for the consideration of questions of interest to all the churches, and the feeling of common and fraternal interest at last has found expression in the International Councils already held and to be held in the future.

No one of them has authority over any one, but is only privileged to advise, with no power of so-called discipline save to withdraw fellowship. The handful of churches on the Atlantic coast has multiplied to 6,000 churches over the breadth of North America. They had their hindrances to rapid growth for half a century by their association with a strongly organized denomination, but they have grown with more and more confidence in their own mission and in the strength of mere fellowship as, next to love and as perhaps one of its best expressions, a "bond of perfectness."

CHAPTER XIII

MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATIONS

It is natural that those engaged in similar work, especially if by its character they are somewhat separated from other men, should desire **Historical** to meet frequently for fellowship and for conference on matters of common interest.

Associations of ministers more or less formal existed early in the history of this country. A Convention of Congregational Ministers in Massachusetts met thus very early in connection with the yearly meeting of the General Court in May; an organization which is still in existence. A fortnightly meeting of ministers was held as far back as 1633, but the tendency on the part of many to claim undue ministerial authority over the local churches made these gatherings suspected by those who did not share these views, and they were therefore intermittent. They have been a quite universal and permanent institution throughout New England during the last century, though they have not generally extended to the West. They were in their origin, and are in their maintenance, voluntary organizations, having no authority in any way over the churches, or even one another.¹

These ministerial associations have also become im-

¹As to the relation of these bodies to the approbation for or licensing of candidates for the ministry, see pages 82-84.

portant custodians of professional character ; this naturally, as any club or society of professional men would do. Any society must make its own rules of admission and of exclusion. A society which can admit can expel. It may limit its membership to pastors, ex-pastors, and other ordained Congregational ministers of good repute and standing. It may then, under its own rules, and for sufficient reasons, remove any such minister from its membership. This of course affects his good name, but it only deprives him of this limited companionship, and, if that be in the compact, of that of other similarly organized professional societies. It neither controls his standing as a member of a local church, nor deprives him of the ministry to which he was ordained by act of an ecclesiastical council.

The only further way in which such a body properly affects the ministerial standing of an individual is, as it is recognized in some of the states as the channel through which the list of Congregational ministers reaches the Year Book. And yet it does not seem right that a minister, who is a member in good standing of a Congregational church, and who has been admitted to the ministry by an ecclesiastical council representing the fellowship of churches, should lose his place on the official record by the action of a professional club or association ; and this appears the more so, since there is no higher authority in the states where the ministerial association is responsible for furnishing the list by which his name can be restored.

Those who believe that ministerial standing should

be in the keeping of a ministerial rather than of an ecclesiastical body, give as the main reasons for their position, (1) that a minister should be tried by his peers (meaning by that term doubtless, those who are especially familiar with the duties and requirements of his office); (2) that the ministers are more deeply interested than others can be in the maintenance of a high standard among those of that class ; (3) that this plan has worked well in the past, and, when superseded by the ecclesiastical body, the results have been less satisfactory.

CHAPTER XIV

ORGANIZATION FOR MISSIONARY WORK

Most of the organizations through which the Congregational churches carry on their missionary work were in their beginnings union societies, originally proposed by Congregationalists but sustained by contributors connected with various evangelical denominations.

**Independent
of the
Churches**

From these societies the other denominations sooner or later withdrew to prosecute their work apart, either taking with them an equitable share of the field and the funds, or leaving the whole work upon the Congregational churches. These societies thus formed expended the contributions intrusted to them and reported to the contributors, but the churches, as such, were not represented in the election of their officers nor in their management.

The tendency in these late years has been toward a closer relation between the churches and these agencies. A definite representation in their meetings for organization and business has been allowed in almost every case. The fullest expression of this desire was made at the session of the National Council at Portland, Maine, in 1901, by the adoption of the following preamble and resolutions:—

WHEREAS, for more than fifteen years the question of the best adjustment of our missionary societies to

one another and to their great work has been constantly before our churches for discussion ; and

WHEREAS, it is most evident that some modification of our present system is almost universally desired ; and,

WHEREAS, there is an imperative need that our missionary societies shall have the confidence of all our churches so that they shall receive a more generous support,

It is therefore *Resolved*, (1) That we urge upon all our churches the importance of laying added emphasis upon the great missionary work at home and abroad to which, as Congregationalists, we are pledged.

Resolved, (2) That each church be requested, by a personal canvass, to reach, so far as possible, every one of its members with a direct personal appeal for some gift to each of our six missionary societies.

Resolved, (3) That our churches, so far as practicable, make the month of October a missionary month.

Resolved, (4) That all our churches should make some provision in their Sunday-schools and Christian Endeavor societies for educating our young people in every department of our missionary work.

Resolved, (5) That as the pastors are the great leaders of the church, we urge that in all ordinations and installations the missionary knowledge and interest of the candidate should be a matter of faithful inquiry.

Resolved, (6) That we approve of so much of the report of the committee of nine as recommends the appointment of all salaried officers in our six societies by executive boards ; of the plan, so far as practicable, of one administrative head ; and of a limited governing membership for each of our home societies.

Resolved, (7) That we would urge the five home

societies to try the experiment of a united annual meeting, allowing the meeting of the American Board to remain unchanged for the present. Having two annual meetings each year, one in the East, and one in the West, will be one step towards a closer federation of all our missionary work.

Resolved, (8) That we recommend that the executive boards of each of our five home societies consider the proposition of having an advisory committee of seven chosen from their own number, which shall hold stated meetings and to which all questions having to do with their joint work shall be referred for advice ; that with the addition of two representatives from the American Board, this advisory committee take such measures as they deem advisable, looking to the organization in all our conferences and states of missionary committees to urge upon the churches the adoption of definite and systematic plans of benevolence, and the appointment of local committees to carry these plans into effect.

Resolved, (9) That we recommend that this advisory committee of nine be empowered at its discretion to employ a secretary who shall devote his time to the promotion of systematic benevolence in the interest of the six societies of our churches, as outlined in his report.

Resolved, (10) That we recommend that there shall be one missionary publication, devoted to all the missionary work of our churches, to be published monthly and to be equal in literary ability and typographical style to the best publications of the day.

Resolved, (11) That we recommend that our missionary societies unite in issuing brief manuals of instruction and information, suitable for permanent use in our Sunday-schools, Young People's Societies and other organizations.

Resolved, finally, that in memory of our noble ancestors and what they have wrought in doing foundation missionary work at home and abroad, and remembering their enthusiastic belief in the Congregational polity as in harmony with our national institutions, it is for us, their children, to push on to larger service, showing thereby that we are worthy to represent the faith and courage and devotion of the Pilgrims.

The six national missionary societies are named below, with the distinctive work of each ; the figures are taken from reports made in 1902 or 1903. They are given in the order of their organization.

1. *The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*, commonly designated the A. B. C. F. M. was organized in 1810, and incorporated under the laws of Massachusetts in 1812.

It conducts extensive missionary operations in Turkey, Bulgaria, India, Ceylon, China, Japan, Africa, the Pacific Islands, Austria, Spain and Mexico. In these countries not less than 75,000,000 people by common understanding with other denominations, look to this Mission Board for Christian instruction and evangelization. Five hundred and forty-nine missionaries sent from this country are conducting the work abroad, aided by about 3,600 trained native Christian workers. There are nearly 56,000 communicants in the native churches and 61,000 pupils in the mission schools. Sixteen collegiate and twelve theological institutions are connected with the foreign work in which some 4,000 students are in

training for Christian leadership among their own people.

Large mission hospitals and dispensaries are maintained in various countries in which annually over 350,000 patients are treated. Extensive publication operations are carried on in the form of weekly and monthly periodicals as well as text-books and a general permanent Christian literature in some twenty-five languages which are understood by not less than 200,000,000 people. Large orphanages are directed in Turkey and India and varied industrial and self-help operations are supervised in an increasing number of its missions.

The Board with the Woman's Boards publish in this country *The Missionary Herald*, *Mission Dayspring*, *Life and Light*, and *Mission Studies*, all monthlies. The three Woman's Boards located respectively in Boston, Massachusetts, Chicago, Illinois, and Oakland, California, are auxiliary societies. The Board has district secretaries in New York City, Chicago and San Francisco. Contributions should be sent to the treasurer and all general correspondence should be addressed to the secretaries of the American Board, Congregational House, Boston, Mass.

2. *The Congregational Education Society*, organized in 1816.—Its work is fourfold: (1) To aid students in their preparation for the ministry. About one hundred and fifty persons receive such needed assistance annually. (2) To aid in establishing and sustaining colleges and academies on home missionary ground. Four colleges and twenty-three academies

are on its list. (3) To aid in supporting common and secondary schools among the Mormon and Spanish-American population of Utah and New Mexico. (4) To aid in supporting theological seminaries.

To aid its work, contributions should be sent to the treasurer at the Congregational House, Boston. To secure aid for a student or for an institution, apply to the secretary at the Congregational House, Boston.

3. *The Congregational Home Missionary Society*, organized in 1826.—Including the work of its auxiliaries, it supports general missionaries and aids in the support of missionary pastors, nearly two thousand in all. These preach regularly in our own or in other languages in more than twenty-five hundred places, located in nearly every state and territory of our land. The states which contribute enough to support their own home missionary work are organized with their own officers and boards of directors, and as auxiliaries send their surplus funds to the National Society. In other states and territories the society appoints and sustains superintendents of its work. It publishes *The Home Missionary* each month, giving information as to its work and needs.

To secure its aid in sustaining a pastor, or in other home missionary work, application should be made in auxiliary states to the state secretary, in all others to the secretary for correspondence at the office of the Society, Fourth Avenue and 22d Street, New York City.

4. *The Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society*, organized in 1832.—Through its Mis-

sionary Department it supports from forty to fifty superintendents and missionaries, who organize on an average about 500 new Sunday-schools each year in needy places, aiding about 1,000 others with visits for reorganization and stimulation, and with grants of literature. An average of more than fifty Congregational churches grow each year out of the schools thus planted. *The Pilgrim Sunday-School Missionary* publishes each quarter statements and illustrations of its work.

Besides this missionary work, the Society conducts three business houses, publishing helps on the Sunday-school lessons, books for Sunday-school libraries, record books for churches and Sunday-schools, and other books. From the profits of the business it contributes several thousands of dollars annually to the missionary work.

Where aid is needed, application should be made to the superintendent in the State, to whom contributions may also be sent. In other cases correspondence and contributions should be sent to the secretary and treasurer at the Congregational House, Boston.

5. *The American Missionary Association*, organized in 1846.—Its work is (1) among the Negroes of the Southern states, 8,000,000; (2) among the North American Indians, 240,000; (3) among the Chinese and Eskimos in America; (4) among the Mountain Whites of the South, 2,000,000; (5) among the people of the new island territory of Porto Rico, representing a million inhabitants. It supports and aids 107 schools, of which forty-three are Normal

schools to prepare teachers, and six institutions for higher education to equip and furnish those who shall be leaders to be pastors of churches and teachers of higher schools. The industries are taught in connection with these schools. It has five theological schools for the preparation of young men for the gospel ministry. It employs about 749 teachers and missionaries. *The American Missionary* is its monthly publication.

Contributions should be sent to the treasurer, and correspondence to the secretaries, at the Congregational Rooms, Fourth Avenue and 22d Street, New York City.

6. *The Congregational Church Building Society*, organized in 1853.—Its work is to pay last bills for young churches which cannot build without aid, either by a grant, or by a loan to churches which can pay it back in a specified time. Aid from the Parsonage Fund is by loan, repaid in quarterly payments through five years. A first mortgage for the whole amount of aid is taken as a safeguard to the church and to prevent alienation of funds. In 1902, ninety-three churches and forty-four parsonages were built. During the history of the society over 3,400 churches have been built with this aid, and more than 840 parsonages, in fifty states and territories. Its work is set forth in *The Church Building Quarterly*.

Applications for aid should be made to the secretary or treasurer, 105 East 22d Street, New York. Contributions may be sent to the treasurer or to the field secretaries in Boston, Chicago or San Francisco.

The National Council's Ministerial Relief Fund also has a place in our Year Book and a claim on our churches. Organized by the Council in Worcester, Massachusetts, October, 1886, by the appointment of a standing committee and authorizing "the treasurer of the trustees of the Council to receive the Knowles legacy, and any other funds intrusted for any department of relief for disabled ministers and the widows and orphans of deceased ministers." The entire care of this work was committed to the trustees by the Council in Portland, Maine, October, 1901. In addition to the Knowles legacy of \$10,000, other sums have been received until the permanent fund, which it is desired shall soon be increased to at least \$1,000,000, is now about \$131,000. Besides there have been distributed \$51,548.90 to beneficiaries.

This fund, though national, cooperates with state organizations existing for the same purpose, supplementing their grants when necessary and aiding those who do not come within the rules governing state grants. It especially cares, however, for those whose service has been in states which do not have local ministerial aid organizations.

Correspondence, relating to information, literature and grants should be addressed to the secretary, Fourth Avenue and 22d Street, New York, and contributions should be sent to the treasurer, Hartford, Connecticut.

Besides the publications of these societies indicated above, they unite in the publication of *Congregational*

Work, in which they give the freshest and most important news from the missionary fields, furnishing ten monthly numbers for ten cents to churches which subscribe for families, or to those subscribing in clubs of ten or more.

APPENDIX

I

HOW TO ORGANIZE A CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH¹

Any group of Christian people who desire to do so have full power to organize a church, elect officers, and choose and call a minister. The church thus formed would be independent. To obtain the fellowship and co-operation of other churches, which they will certainly need, they should either ask their aid and counsel in organizing, or, if already organized, should seek formal recognition by them, and their expressed fellowship.

I. ORGANIZING WITH THE AID OF A COUNCIL.

The steps in effecting the organization, after such informal consideration and discussion as may have occurred, are as follows: —

1. At a meeting of those interested in such a movement, a chairman and a clerk should be chosen as temporary officers. The clerk should preserve the record of the call for this meeting and of all votes passed and committees appointed. The object of the meeting should be stated, and after prayer the opportunity and duty considered. It should be made clear that the establishment of a Congregational church is for the best interests of those concerned and for the good of the community. This being evident,

2. A list of the proposed members should be prepared, either immediately or by reference to a committee, specifying those who desire to come on confession of their faith, and those who bring letters from other churches or satisfactory substitutes therefor. When this list is completed it may be approved at once. This vote may be taken

¹ From the Council Manual.

separately upon each name reported if so ordered by the meeting. Only those thus included should take part in the further proceedings.

3. It may then be

Voted, That we are ready to proceed to take the necessary steps toward the organization of a church of the Lord Jesus Christ upon Congregational principles.

4. A form of covenant, a statement of Christian doctrine and a form for the reception of members as the basis of the proposed church, and also by-laws for the permanent regulation of its affairs are now to be prepared or selected. The forms given in this manual for all these purposes are recommended, and may be accepted if satisfactory. For this purpose the following votes will be necessary : —

Voted, (1) That the covenant, statement of Christian doctrine and form for the reception of members given in "The Council Manual" be accepted.

Voted, (2) That we accept the code of by-laws given in "The Council Manual," amended as follows : —

[1] By filling the several blanks occurring therein, as follows : —

a. In Article I, by inserting the name of the church, namely (name).

b. In Article V, Sect. 1 (3), by inserting the number of the deacons, namely (number).

c. In Article VIII, Sect. 2 (3), by inserting the date of the annual meeting, namely (date).¹

d. Article VIII, Sect. 2 (5), by inserting the number

¹ It is desirable that this should be placed as soon after the close of the calendar year as possible, to which date the annual reports should be brought. This will be a great help in the prompt publication of the denominational statistics.

of members necessary to constitute a quorum, namely (number).

[2] In regard to financial administration :

a. By accepting in Article V, Sect. 1 (7), either the paragraph relating to Trustees or that relating to the Prudential Committee and excluding the other; or by cancelling both. If the paragraph relating to Trustees is retained, by inserting the number of Trustees, which should be either three, six, or nine.

b. By accepting in Article VI one of the two names, "Trustees" or "Prudential Committee," and excluding the other; or by substituting for this article the form given in the foot-note thereto.

5. If desired, it may here be

Voted, That we approve "The Council Manual" as a whole, including the documents and by-laws already approved by vote, and that it shall be the manual of this church upon its organization.

6. It should then be

Voted, That the covenant, statement of doctrine, form for the reception of members, and by-laws now approved shall go into effect immediately upon the formal organization of the church by covenant.

[If it be deemed expedient, instead of acting at once upon the list of members, the form of covenant, the statement of doctrine, the form for the reception of members, and the code of by-laws, two committees may be appointed, the one to report the list of members, and the other to report upon the remaining subjects here mentioned, which committees may report at once or at an adjourned meeting.]

7. When the by-laws have been adopted, a clerk and two or more deacons, as determined by the by-laws, should be chosen by ballot, their term of service to begin with the formal organization of the church.

In the first election of deacons a preliminary vote should be passed, according to the number of deacons to be elected, in form as follows : —

Voted, (1) That we now proceed to elect one deacon to serve until the next annual meeting, one to serve until the end of one year from the next annual meeting, and one until the end of two years from the next annual meeting, etc.

Voted, (2) That this election of officers go into effect upon the formal organization of the church.

8. It is to be noted that the proceedings thus far are preliminary to the actual organization of the church, simply determining the basis on which that organization shall take place. It is the custom of the Congregational churches that an ecclesiastical council be called by those desiring to form a new church, which council, composed of neighboring Congregational churches, considers the need and opportunity of the proposed church and examines into the statement of Christian doctrine and polity which has been approved, and, if the result be favorable, assists in completing the organization and extends to it the fellowship of the Congregational churches. Such council should consist of a moderate number of churches, which should be of those near at hand, if practicable. A small number of individuals whose advice, from their official or special relation, it may be desirable to obtain, may also be invited as a part of the council.

For calling such a council the following votes should be passed : —

Voted, (1) That a council of Congregational churches be requested to meet to aid in completing our organization as a church and to extend to us the fellowship of the Congregational churches.

Voted, (2) That the following-named churches and individuals be invited to constitute said council, namely (names).

Voted, (3) That the form of letter missive given in "The Council Manual" for convening such a council and marked (Form A) be adopted.

Voted, (4) That a committee, namely [—————] be appointed to issue the letters missive, inserting therein such date as may seem desirable; and that this committee present for us to the council the proper records, papers, and statements.

9. When the council is assembled and organized for business, those who have invited the council to meet should first represent the need for and opportunity of the proposed church.

10. They should then present the list of proposed members, the statement of Christian doctrine, covenant, form for the reception of members and by-laws, and the votes by which they have agreed to adopt them. It is assumed that this preparatory work has been done in the manner fully suggested in the preceding sections. If any part of it has been omitted, the proposed church may at once take the action necessary if the council approve.

11. The council should examine, either through a committee or otherwise, the papers presented, the action already taken, and the proposed list of members. The council should then vote whether to approve and proceed to complete the organization. If the vote be favorable,

12. After prayer,

Those who have never before made public confession of faith in Christ will now make that confession, the moderator saying:—

"Do you now publicly confess your faith in Jesus Christ, accepting him as your Lord and Saviour, and do you desire now to come into fellowship with his people in the formation of this church?"

Each one will answer, "I do."

13. Baptism will here be administered to those who have not been previously baptized, which should be done by an ordained minister.¹

14. All the proposed members, their names being read, should then agree to the following covenant or its equivalent, as previously approved by them and now read by the moderator, which is the *permanent covenant* of the church: —

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 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 this 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.

15. After appropriate prayer, the moderator should at once declare that the church is now duly constituted, and that according to the vote of its members, the statement of Christian doctrine, the form for the reception of members, and the by-laws, as previously approved, do now go into effect, and that the officers previously selected do now enter upon their respective duties.

¹ It is to be understood that the mode of baptism is not arbitrarily prescribed in our Congregational churches.

16. The fellowship of the churches should then be extended by the moderator, or by some other person appointed by the council.

[It is customary at such times to have other religious services, often including a sermon.]

NOTE.—The clerk should copy in full into the record book of the church the covenant, form of reception, statement of doctrine, and by-laws. It is especially desirable that the record of all the meetings connected with the organization of the church should be entered in full in the permanent record book.¹

17. To secure enrolment in the permanent list of the recognized Congregational churches, application for membership should be made to the local conference or association of churches within whose bounds the church is situated. This makes the connection with the denomination complete.

II. ORGANIZING WITHOUT THE AID OF A COUNCIL.

The method previously laid down was formerly the only customary method of organizing a Congregational church. It still has the advantage of obtaining the wisdom of neighboring churches as to the advisability of the proposed organization, secures the active sympathy of the churches in needed cases, and prevents mistakes in the proceedings and form of organization. It is to be commended in all practicable cases.

But in exceptional cases where the immediate convening of a council is difficult, a church can be organized by

¹ The Pilgrim Church Record and Register, sufficient for a church of three hundred members, is published by the Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society for this purpose, and may be procured from the Boston or Chicago agencies, or through the State Superintendents. Price, \$2.00 and postage.

those associating, and the formal recognition and fellowship of the Congregational churches may be secured at a later date.

In such cases it will be wise to obtain the presence and counsel of some pastor of experience and standing, or of some official connected with our missionary work.

The action and votes set forth under paragraphs 1-7 should be carefully followed.

It should then be

Voted, That we are ready to enter into covenant with one another as a church.

These steps having been taken, the church may immediately or at some appointed time be constituted in the following manner:—

1. The members who have agreed to organize should select one of their own number, or some ordained Congregational minister from without, as moderator, to preside at this service, the temporary clerk still acting as clerk.

2. The moderator should now proceed according to the order to be followed by the moderator of a council, as set forth in paragraphs 12-15; but he has no authority or power to extend the fellowship of the churches.

III. HOW AN ORGANIZED EVANGELICAL CHURCH CAN OBTAIN FELLOWSHIP.

In obtaining the fellowship of the churches such a church should, at the earliest practicable moment, secure its

1. *Recognition by Council.*—When a church has been formally organized by those constituting it, or when any other organized evangelical church desires to be received into fellowship, it may call a council of Congregational churches for this purpose.¹

¹ For form of letter missive suitable for this purpose see Form B in this manual.

The council, when assembled, will consider the application, and if the evangelical character and orderly organization of the church be found satisfactory, recognition and reception into fellowship may be effected by vote, and a public service held, in which the right hand of fellowship of the Congregational churches extended to the church applying is the important and significant part.

2. *Enrolment by Association or Conference.* — Even in scattered communities it is seldom impossible to convene a council which will be greatly helpful to the new enterprise and to the whole community. If it be practically impossible to call a council either for organization or recognition, as is sometimes the case where the churches are widely separated, application to be received into fellowship may be made to an association or conference of Congregational churches, which, on the same conditions which would satisfy a council, may vote to place the new church on its roll, and thus extend to it the fellowship of the churches.

IV. APPLICATION FOR INCORPORATION.

In case the church is to become a corporate body, the object which is to be stated in the application for incorporation and which in some States would be regarded as the constitution of the church, should read as follows: —

The object of this organization is the promotion of Christian instruction and the support of the public worship of God in accordance with the doctrines and polity of the churches represented in the National Council of the Congregational churches of the United States.

II

BY-LAWS¹

ARTICLE I.

NAME.

This Church shall be called the.....
Congregational Church of.....

ARTICLE II.

COVENANT.

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 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.

¹ From the Council Manual

ARTICLE III.

CHARACTER.

SECTION 1. *Polity.* Its government is vested in the body of believers who compose it. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and coöperation which are common among Congregational churches, and it is in fellowship with all churches which acknowledge Jesus the Christ to be their divine Redeemer and Lord.

SECT. 2. *Doctrine.* It receives the Scriptures as its authority in matters of faith and practice. Its understanding of Christian truth as contained therein is in accord with the belief of the Congregational churches of the United States, and substantially as set forth by unanimous vote of the National Council of 1865, or by the National Council's Commission in 1883, in the form authorized to be printed in this Manual.¹

ARTICLE IV.

MEMBERSHIP.

SECTION 1. *Qualifications.* Its membership consists of such persons as confess Jesus Christ to be their Saviour and Lord, and who, (1) after due examination, either by the Church Committee or by the Church itself, as to their Christian experience, and, if coming from other churches, as to their letters of dismissal and recommendation or satisfactory substitutes therefor, and (2) after proposal from the pulpit on some Lord's Day prior to that of their reception, (3) have been accepted by vote of the Church and, having been baptized, (4) enter into its Covenant and subscribe to its By-Laws, and are formally received into its fellowship.

¹ See pages 176-180

SECT. 2. *Reception.* The reception of members shall ordinarily be upon some Lord's Day when the Lord's Supper is administered, and shall be in the form appended to these By-Laws.¹

SECT. 3. *Duties.* Members are expected, first of all, to be faithful in all the spiritual duties essential to the Christian life; and also to attend habitually the services of this Church, to give regularly for its support and its charities, and to share in its organized work.

SECT. 4. *Rights.* Such members as are in full and regular standing, and do not hold letters of dismission and recommendation, and have attained the age of twenty-one years, and such only, may act and vote in the transactions of the Church.

SECT. 5. *Termination.* The continuance of membership shall be subject to the principles and usages of the Congregational churches, and especially as follows: —

(1.) Any member in good and regular standing who desires a letter of dismission and recommendation to any other evangelical church is entitled to receive it upon his written request. In case of removal to another community he should promptly make such request. This letter shall be valid as a recommendation for only one year from its date, unless renewed, and this restriction shall be stated in the letter.

(2.) If a member desires to join a religious body with which this Church is not in fellowship, or which would not receive its letter, the Church may, at his request, give him a certificate of his good standing and terminate his membership.

(3.) If a member in good standing request to be released from his covenant obligations to this Church for reasons which the Church may finally deem satisfactory,

¹ See pages 181-185

after it shall have patiently and kindly endeavored to secure his continuance in its fellowship, such request may be granted and his membership terminated.

(4.) The Church may also, after due notice and hearing and kindly effort to make such action unnecessary, terminate the membership of persons for the space of two years non-resident, or for the same space of time not habitually worshipping with the Church, or for the same space of time not contributing to its support according to the system prescribed by the Church or in some way satisfactory thereto.

(5.) Should a member become an offence to the Church and to its good name by reason of immoral or unchristian conduct, or by persistent breach of his covenant vows, the Church may terminate his membership, but only after due notice and hearing, and after faithful efforts have been made to bring such member to repentance and amendment.

(6.) The membership of no person shall be terminated (except by letter) at the meeting when the recommendation for such action is made.

SECT. 6. *Restoration.* Any person whose membership has been terminated may be restored by vote of the Church, if for any offence, upon evidence of his repentance and reformation, or, if on account of continued absence, upon satisfactory explanation.

ARTICLE V.

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES.

SECTION I. The officers and committees shall be as follows:—

(1.) A Pastor, to be chosen and called by the Church

whenever a vacancy occurs, and to be installed by Council when the Church and Pastor shall so agree.

(2.) A Clerk, to be chosen at each annual meeting to serve for one year and until his successor shall be chosen and qualified.

(3.) . . . Deacons, one of whom shall be elected at each annual meeting to serve for a number of years equal to the number of deacons.¹

(4.) A Treasurer, to be chosen at each annual meeting to serve for one year and until another shall be chosen in his stead.

(5.) A Superintendent of the Sunday-school, to be chosen at each annual meeting.

(6.) A Church Committee, to act with regard to the spiritual concerns of the Church, which shall consist of the above-named officers.

(7.) [If the Church property and the support of public worship are to be in the hands of the Church] : —

A Board of . . . Trustees, one third of whom shall be elected at each annual meeting to serve for three years and until their successors shall be appointed, to hold in trust the property of the Church, if the laws of the State so require, and to manage its financial and business affairs, — always under the direction of the Church.²

¹ In organizing a church the Deacons should be elected to serve for one, two, three, or more years, respectively, according to the number of Deacons. This section may be suitably altered to meet the preference of any church in regard to term of office. The fraction of a year up to the next annual meeting should be regarded as a full year. In accordance with the practice of some churches, the following may be added by special vote if the Church so desires: —

“ No person shall be eligible to reëlection as Deacon, after serving a full term as such, until after an interval of one year.”

² As to the election of these officers the Church should carefully consider the laws of the State in which it is situated.

OR

A Prudential Committee, which shall consist of three or more as may be determined at the time, to have charge, under the direction of the Church, of its financial and business affairs, to be chosen at each annual meeting, and to serve for one year.

(8.) All the officers and committees named in the above sections shall be elected by ballot, and all elections shall be determined by a majority of the votes cast by the members present who are qualified to vote.

(9.) The Church may also choose a Music Committee and such other committees as it may deem advisable.

SECT. 2. The Pastor shall have in charge the spiritual welfare of the congregation; he shall preach the Word and have in his care the stated services of public worship, and shall administer the sacraments. He shall preside at all meetings of the Church, except as limited in Article VIII, Sect. 2 (4), relating to business meetings.

SECT. 3. The Clerk shall keep a complete record of the transactions at all business meetings of the Church, which shall be read for approval at the next following special business meeting, and also of the Church Committee and of the Prudential Committee, or of the Board of Trustees, if either of these bodies shall be chosen. He shall secure the signatures of members to the By-Laws, and keep a register of their names with dates of admission and dismissal or death, together with a record of baptisms. He shall also notify all officers, members of committees, and delegates of their election or appointment. He shall issue letters of dismissal and recommendation voted by the Church, preserve on file all communications and written official reports, and give legal notice of all meetings where such notice is necessary, as indicated in

these By-Laws. The Clerk shall be sworn if required by the law of the State.

SECT. 4. The Deacons shall provide for the Lord's Supper and aid in its administration, and shall care for the poor, calling upon the Treasurer, by vote as a board, at their discretion, for any funds in his possession held for these purposes.

SECT. 5. The Church Committee shall examine and propound candidates for admission to the Church, shall provide for the supply of the pulpit in any vacation of the Pastor, shall decide on objects for regular or special collections when the Church has not acted thereon, shall have regard to discipline as provided in the article relating to that subject, and shall be watchful for the spiritual interests of the Church. It shall make a written report at each annual meeting of the matters under its charge.

SECT. 6. The Treasurer shall keep separate accounts as follows:—

(a) Of all moneys contributed at the Lord's Supper, which shall be primarily devoted to the relief of the poor, and which contributions, together with all other moneys given for that purpose, he shall hold subject to the order of the Board of Deacons. (b) Of all moneys raised for the objects of Christian benevolence, to be paid by him to the several persons or societies entitled thereto. (c) Of all moneys received by him for the support of public worship or of any department of church work, to be paid out on the order of the Church or of any persons or committees authorized by the Church therefor.

All the Treasurer's accounts shall be kept distinct from all other accounts, and all deposits made, and all checks drawn by him shall be in the name of the Church.

He shall make an annual written report in detail of

his receipts and expenditures, properly audited by some person previously appointed by the Church.

SECT. 7. The Superintendent of the Sunday-school shall have the general oversight and direction of the school, and shall conduct its affairs upon such general plans and in such methods as may be approved by the Church Committee.

He shall, at the annual meeting of the Church, present a written report of the work of the school during the year, with such recommendations as he may deem wise.

ARTICLE VI.

PROPERTY AND FINANCES.¹

The Trustees or Prudential Committee shall have the actual care of the place of worship, but shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any property without a specific vote of the Church authorizing such action. They shall provide, under the direction of the Church, for the raising of money for the support of its

¹The form of administration here proposed is prepared to meet the needs of incorporated churches in different States. Such a church should adopt, according to its circumstances, one of the two names given and cancel the other. "Trustees" will be proper where that name is required by law and where the Church is not connected with any parish. In some States the Trustees hold the property for the church. "Prudential Committee" will be proper for an incorporated church not connected with any parish or religious society nor existing in a State where Trustees are required by law. In the case of a church not incorporated connected with an existing parish or religious society which controls the support of public worship, as is still somewhat extensively found in the older States, the following should be substituted for this article: —

"The Church shall from time to time appoint committees to coöperate with the parish or religious society with which it is or may be connected in the selection or the dismissal of a Pastor or in the furtherance of other joint interests."

public services, shall have general charge of its finances other than moneys contributed at the Lord's Supper or for any charitable or benevolent objects, shall authorize and direct the Treasurer as to the payment of moneys under their control, shall provide for the proper auditing of his accounts unless the Church shall appoint an auditor, and may, at their discretion, call meetings of the Church for matters with which they are concerned. They shall make at the annual meeting a detailed report in writing of all their transactions during the year.

If the Church shall elect Trustees, this body shall hold in trust any property so required to be held by the laws of the State.

ARTICLE VII.

ORGANIZATIONS.

The Church regards as integral parts of itself all organizations formed for the purposes of ministration and which use the facilities of the Church property. Of all such organizations the Pastor shall have general oversight, and the Church will expect a report from each at its annual meeting.¹

ARTICLE VIII.

MEETINGS.

SECTION I. *For Worship.* (1.) Public services shall be held statedly on the Lord's Day and on some regular evening of each week.

¹ It has been found advantageous in some churches to provide for occasional or stated meetings of the heads of all the several departments of Christian work for consultation, to insure unity in work and to avoid possible interference of plans and appointments. This is frequently called the Pastor's Council.

(2.) The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated at such regular dates as the Church may, from time to time, determine; and unless otherwise ordered, upon the first Lord's Day of each alternate month beginning with January. The midweek meeting next preceding shall be devoted to a Preparatory Service.

(3.) Occasional religious meetings may be appointed by the Pastor at his discretion, or by vote of the Church.

SECT. 2. *For Business.* (1.) At any of the regular meetings for worship the Church may, without special notice, act upon the reception of members previously propounded or upon the dismissal of members to other churches, and upon the appointment of delegates to councils and conferences of churches, but not upon other business.

(2.) The Pastor may, and shall, when requested by the Church Committee, call from the pulpit special business meetings, the particular object of the meeting being clearly stated in the notice.

Special meetings of the Church shall also be called by the Clerk upon the written application of any five adult members specifying the object thereof, which notice shall be read at the public service on the Lord's Day next preceding the day fixed for such meeting. No special meeting shall be held on the same day on which the notice is given.

(3.) The annual meeting of the Church shall be held on¹.....
at which time the annual reports shall be presented and officers elected, and such other business transacted as may be specified in the call or authorized in the By-Laws. This meeting shall be called by the Clerk in the manner specified in the paragraph next preceding.

¹ See foot-note p. 152

(4.) At all meetings for business called by the Clerk, a chairman shall be chosen by vote of the Church but at all other meetings the Pastor shall preside, except that in his absence, or when the business relates to himself, the Church shall elect a chairman.

(5.) At the annual and all special meetings . . . members shall be necessary to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

ARTICLE IX.

DISCIPLINE.

SECTION 1. Should any unhappy differences arise between members, the aggrieved member shall follow, in a tender spirit, the rules given by our Lord in the eighteenth chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew.

SECT. 2. Should any case of gross breach of covenant, or of public scandal, occur, the Church Committee shall endeavor to remove the offence, and if such effort fail shall report the case to the Church.

SECT. 3. If the Church vote to entertain a complaint, which must be made in writing, it shall appoint a reasonable time and place of hearing and notify the person in question thereof, furnishing him with a copy of the charges.

SECT. 4. At such hearing, the accused member may call to his aid any member of the Church as counsel. If he shall not present himself at the time appointed, or give satisfactory reasons for his neglect so to do, the Church may proceed in his absence.

SECT. 5. All such proceedings should be pervaded by a spirit of Christian kindness and forbearance, but should an adverse decision be reached, the Church may proceed to admonish or to declare the offender to be no longer in the membership of the Church.

SECT. 6. In case of grave difficulty the Church will be ready, if requested, to ask advice of a mutual council.

ARTICLE X.

AMENDMENTS.

These By-Laws may be amended by a three-fourths vote of the members present and voting at any annual meeting of the Church, or at a meeting specially called for that purpose, the proposed amendment being inserted in the call; but no change shall be made in Articles II and III, entitled "Covenant" and "Character," except at an annual meeting, and by a three-fourths vote of all the members of the Church entitled to vote, said proposed change having been laid before the Church in writing at a business meeting not less than one month before the time of the proposed action, and read from the pulpit on the Lord's Day next succeeding such proposal.

III

CONGREGATIONAL STATEMENTS OF DOCTRINE

THE BURIAL HILL DECLARATION OF FAITH ADOPTED
BY THE NATIONAL COUNCIL, 1865.

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 peculiar faith and order, we extend to all believers the hand of Christian fellowship, upon the basis of those great fundamental truths in which all Christians should 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 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 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 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 coöperate with all who hold these truths. With them we will carry the gospel into every part of the 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” fulfil 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.

THE STATEMENT OF DOCTRINE

PRESENTED IN 1883 BY THE NATIONAL COUNCIL COMMISSION, IN THE FORM AUTHORIZED FOR THIS PURPOSE IN 1895.

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 fulness 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 guidance 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 coöperate 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 as the sign of cleansing 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 Saviour Jesus Christ ; in the resurrection of the dead ; and in a final judgment, the issues of which are everlasting punishment, and everlasting life.

IV

FORM FOR THE RECEPTION OF MEMBERS¹

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 you 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 in 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.

¹ From the Council Manual.

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.

[Or instead of the above, the following form (which is mainly a variation in the translation and substantially equivalent) may be used if preferred by the church:—

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 SPIRIT, 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 living and the dead. I believe in the HOLY SPIRIT; the Holy Church Universal, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the dead; 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, **Consecration** 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
Baptism 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 ¹ 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
Divine Promise all sufficient aid, upon which you may joyfully rely, in the

¹ This is the translation of the Revised Version, and is accurate and proper.

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-travellers 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 **Covenant** confessed the faith of Christ before witnesses **with the** and have given yourselves to God in His ever-**Church** lasting 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 yourselves with this 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 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. 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 one of the following benedictions:—

“ 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, the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”

“ 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.”

V

RULES FOR JOINT ACTION¹

Form of Rules for Joint Action of the—— Congregational Church and—— Congregational Society.

I.

Whenever the Church and Society shall be without a settled Pastor and a new one is to be obtained, a joint Committee of the Church and Society, consisting of seven persons, of whom four shall be chosen by the Church and three by the Society, shall provide a supply for the pulpit, and take all necessary measures to that end. The Church shall have the right, in all cases, to select a Pastor (or Colleague Pastor, when it may be deemed expedient by the Church and Society to settle a Colleague Pastor), to be proposed to the Society for its concurrence. If said Society shall concur with the Church in said selection, a call shall be given by the Church and Society jointly, to the person selected; but if the Society do not concur in the selection, the Church shall select again, and so again, from time to time, until the Church and Society shall agree in a choice, and when so agreed, a call shall be given to the person so chosen, by the Church and Society as stated above; that is, jointly. It is herein agreed that no Committee of Supply of the pulpit shall ever have the power to contract with any minister to occupy the pulpit as "stated supply" or "acting pastor" — and no minister shall so occupy it — for *a period longer than three months*, without special instruction to that effect by both Church and Society at meetings legally called for that purpose.

II.

The amount of salary to be given to the Pastor shall be fixed by the Society.

¹ From a "Hand-Book of Congregationalism," by Rev. Henry Martyn Dexter, D.D.

III.

Temporary supply of the pulpit, during the absence or sickness of the Pastor, shall be provided by the Pastor and Deacons of the Church, and the bills of necessary expenses incurred for that purpose shall be submitted to the Prudential Committee of the Society, and, when approved by them, shall be paid by the Treasurer. By the word "Church," hereinbefore used, is meant all (male) members of the Church in good and regular standing, of the age of twenty-one years and upwards.

IV.

A Committee to regulate the matter of singing, and of Church music, shall be appointed jointly by the Church and Society (annually), three persons by the former, and two by the latter.

V.

No alteration shall be made in these rules, on the part of either Church or Society, unless the same be agreed to by two-thirds of the members of each, present at legal meetings, seasonable notice of such proposed alteration having been previously given.

VI
FORMS OF LETTERS MISSIVE¹
 [Form A.]
**FROM INDIVIDUALS DESIRING HELP IN
 ORGANIZING A CHURCH.**

To the..... Congregational Church,
in....., GREETING:—

After careful deliberation, and after seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we have come to regard it as our duty and privilege to associate together as a church of the Lord Jesus Christ, in this place, and have taken the steps preparatory thereto. We therefore affectionately request you to be present by pastor and delegate in an ecclesiastical council, to be constituted as stated below, hereby called to meet in our place of worship on....., the..... day of....., 189....., at.....o'clock.....M., which shall review our proceedings, and consider the need and opportunity for the proposed church; and if the result of such examination be favorable, assist in completing the organization, and extend to it the fellowship of the Congregational churches.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace,

..... }
 } *Committee*
 } *for the*
 } *Brethren.*

.....
 [Date and place.]

The following named churches (and persons) are invited:—

[Names.]

By vote of the associated brethren.

.....
² *Clerk, pro tem.*

¹ From the Council Manual.

² When the names of the members of a committee are not in their own handwriting, all copies of the letters missive should be authenticated by the actual signature of the clerk.

[Form B.]

FOR THE RECEPTION OF A CHURCH
INTO FELLOWSHIP.

The..... *Church in*

To the..... *Congregational Church*
in....., GREETING: —

This Church, organized as a church of the Lord Jesus Christ upon Congregational principles, earnestly desires the special communion of the Congregational churches, for the enjoyment of their fellowship and participation in common work for the advancement of the Kingdom of Christ. We therefore affectionately request you to be present by pastor and delegate in an ecclesiastical council, to be constituted as stated below, hereby called to meet in our place of worship on..... the..... day of..... 189....., at..... o'clock..... M., which shall make the necessary examinations into our polity, faith, and practice, and if the result be favorable, extend to us the fellowship of the Congregational churches.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace,

..... }
..... } *Committee*
..... } *of the*
..... } *Church.*

.....
[Date and place.]

The churches (and persons) invited are as follows: —

[Names.]

In accordance with the vote of the Church.

.....
Church Clerk.

[Form C.]

FOR THE ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION
OF A PASTOR.

The..... *Congregational Church*
in.....

To the..... *Congregational Church*
in....., GREETING:—

This Church, having devoutly sought the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, has united in the choice of Mr. A. B. for its pastor and teacher, and he has responded favorably to its call. We therefore affectionately request you to be present by pastor and delegate, in an ecclesiastical council to be constituted as stated below, hereby called to meet in our place of worship on, the..... day of.....189....., at.....o'clock.....M., which shall review our proceedings and make the necessary examinations, and if the result be favorable, proceed with us to his ordination as a minister of the Word, and his installation as pastor of this Church, and extend to him the fellowship of the ministers and churches.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace,

..... }
..... } ¹ *Committee*
..... } *of the*
..... } *Church.*

.....
[Date and place.]

The churches (and persons) invited are as follows:—

[Names.]

In accordance with the vote of the Church.

.....
Church Clerk.

¹ If a church is in connection with an incorporated parish or society, a committee of the parish should also sign the letter.

[Form D.]

FOR ORDINATION WITHOUT INSTALLATION.

The.....*Congregational Church*
in.....

To the.....*Congregational Church*
in....., GREETING: —

Whereas, Mr. A. B., a member of this Church, believing that the Lord has called him to the ministry of the Word, desires ordination in view of special work now before him, namely,¹....., and trusts that he has obtained the preparation of mind and heart necessary to qualify him for its sacred duties, we therefore affectionately request you to be present by pastor and delegate in an ecclesiastical council, to be constituted as stated below, hereby called to meet in our place of worship on....., the..... day of..... 189....., at.....o'clock.....M., which shall review our proceedings and make the necessary examination, and if the result be favorable, proceed with us to his ordination and extend to him the fellowship of the Congregational ministers and churches.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace,

..... }
 } *Committee*
 } *of the*
 } *Church.*

.....
 [Date and place.]

The churches (and persons) invited are as follows: —

[Names.]

In accordance with the vote of the Church.

.....
Church Clerk.

¹The work should be specified, such as "pastoral service," "foreign missionary work," "home missionary work," "as an evangelist," etc.

[Form E.]

FOR THE INSTALLATION OF A PASTOR.

The Congregational Church
in

To the Congregational Church
in, GREETING:—

This Church, having devoutly sought the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, has united in the choice of Rev. A. B. for its pastor and teacher, and he has responded favorably to its call. We therefore affectionately request you to be present by pastor and delegate in an ecclesiastical council, to be constituted as stated below, hereby called to meet in our place of worship on, the day of, 189....., at o'clockM., which shall review our proceedings and make the necessary examinations, and if the result be favorable, proceed with us to his installation as pastor of this Church, and extend to him the fellowship of the ministers and churches.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace,

..... }
..... } ¹ Committee
..... } of the
..... } Church.

.....
[Date and place.]

The churches (and persons) invited are as follows:—

[Names.]

In accordance with the vote of the Church.

.....
Church Clerk.

¹ See note to Form C.

[Form F.]

FOR THE DISMISSAL OF A PASTOR.

The.....*Congregational Church*
in.....

To the.....*Congregational Church*
in....., GREETING:—

The Rev. A. B., pastor of this Church, having tendered his resignation of the pastoral office, and the Church, after prayerful deliberation, having voted to accept this resignation, subject to the advice of an ecclesiastical council, we therefore affectionately request you to be present by pastor and delegate in an ecclesiastical council, to be constituted as stated below, hereby called to meet in our place of worship on....., the.....day of....., 189....., at.....o'clock.....M., which shall review the action thus far taken, and in view of existing conditions, give such advice as it shall deem wise.¹

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace,

..... }
 } ² *Committee*
 } *of the*
 } *Church.*

.....
 [Date and place.]

The churches (and persons) invited are as follows:—

[Names.]

In accordance with the vote of the Church.

.....
Church Clerk.

¹ In case the parties desire to empower the council to declare the pastoral relation terminated, instead of the last clause, "give such advice as it shall deem wise," the following words should be substituted: "if it shall seem wise, declare the pastoral relation terminated."

² See note to Form C.

[Form G.]

FOR ADVICE IN SPECIAL CASES.

The.....Congregational Church
in.....

To the.....Congregational Church
in....., GREETING: —

Whereas this Church is in circumstances which make it need-
ful that it should obtain wise and godly advice from neighboring
churches whose judgment, it may be hoped, will be guided by
the Holy Spirit, we therefore affectionately request you to be
present by pastor and delegate in an ecclesiastical council, to be
constituted as stated below, hereby called to meet in our place
of worship on....., the.....day of.....
189....., at.....o'clock.....M., which shall consider the facts
and questions then to be laid before it, and which shall give to
us such fraternal advice as it may deem important with reference
to the work committed to our hands.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace,

..... }
..... } Committee
..... } of the
..... } Church.

.....
[Date and place.]

The churches (and persons) invited are as follows: —

[Names.]

In accordance with the vote of the Church.

.....
Church Clerk.

[Form H.]

FOR ADVICE IN CASE OF INTERNAL DISSENSIONS.

*The.....Congregational Church
in.....*

*To the.....Congregational Church
in....., GREETING: —*

Whereas, the peace of **this** Church is disturbed by internal differences between brethren, which are injurious to its prosperity and to the cause of Christ; and whereas, in such cases it is the privilege of any church to ask for wise and godly counsel from neighboring churches with the hope of thereby removing the causes of disturbance and securing harmony; and whereas, brethren who differ in their present judgment agree to this reference, we therefore affectionately request you to be present by pastor and delegate, in an ecclesiastical council to be constituted as stated below, hereby called to meet in our place of worship on....., the..... day of....., 189..... at.....o'clock.....M., to which these difficulties within the Church will be made known, and which, after due deliberations, shall give to us the counsel to which it shall be divinely led.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace,

..... }
..... } *Committee*
..... } *of the*
..... } *Church.*

.....
[Date and place.]

The churches (and persons) invited are as follows: —

[Names.]

In accordance with the vote of the Church.

.....
Church Clerk.

[Form I.]

FOR A MUTUAL COUNCIL IN CASE OF
ALLEGED GRIEVANCE.

The..... Congregational Church
in.....

To the..... Congregational Church
in....., GREETING: —

Whereas, Brother A. B., who has been deprived of good and regular standing in this Church by act of the Church, alleges that this action is unjust and improper, and desires that the Church will join with him in calling a mutual council to consider his alleged grievance and advise in reference thereto; and whereas the Church, desiring only that which is according to the rules of the Gospel of Christ, accedes to his request, we therefore affectionately request you to be present by pastor and delegate in an ecclesiastical council, to be constituted (by mutual agreement) as stated below, hereby called to meet in our place of worship on....., the day of....., 189....., at..... o'clock.....M., which shall review all the proceedings in this case, make the necessary examinations, and give such advice as it shall find required by Congregational principles in the spirit of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace,

..... }
..... } Committee
..... } of the
..... } Church.

.....
[Date and place.]

....., Complainant.

The churches (and persons) invited are as follows: —

[Names.]

In accordance with the vote of the Church,

.....
Church Clerk.

[Form J.]

FOR AN *EX-PARTE* COUNCIL TO CONSIDER
AN ALLEGED GRIEVANCE.

To the.....*Congregational Church*
in....., GREETING: —

Whereas the undersigned has been by the act of the.....
Congregational Church in.....deprived of his
good and regular standing in that church, and thereby of his
communion with neighboring churches, which action he holds
to have been erroneous both in method and substance, and an
injury to him as a Christian brother; and whereas, he has re-
quested the Church to join him in calling a mutual council
to ask the advice of neighboring churches in the case, which re-
quest the Church has refused to grant, as he thinks, unreason-
ably; in accordance with the method of relief acknowledged
among our churches, the undersigned affectionately requests you
to be present by pastor and delegate in an *ex-parte* ecclesiastical
council to be constituted as stated below, hereby called to meet
in....., on....., the.....
day of....., 189....., at.....o'clock.....M.,
to which shall be communicated all the facts in the case, and
which will be respectfully asked to give such advice as shall be
warranted, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Trusting in your willingness to listen and to aid in securing
the removal of any injury, if such should be found to exist,

Yours in Christian fellowship,

.....

.....
[Date and place.]

The churches (and persons) invited are as follows: —

[Names.]

VII

FORMS RELATING TO THE DISMISSION OF
CHURCH MEMBERS

I. APPLICATION FOR UNITING IN THE FORMATION
OF A NEW CHURCH.

To the..... Church
of.....

DEAR BRETHREN: —

Being desirous of uniting with other Christian brethren in the formation of a new Congregational church in....., I hereby respectfully request a letter of dismission and recommendation for that purpose, to take effect when such church shall be duly organized and received into the fellowship of the churches.

Yours in Christian fellowship,

(Signed).....

.....189.....

2. LETTER OF DISMISSION FOR THE FORMATION
OF A NEW CHURCH.

The *Congregational*
Church of.....

Sends GREETING: —

This certifies that....., a
member in good and regular standing of this Church, is at
.....own request hereby dismissed and affectionately recom-
mended to unite with other Christian brethren in the organization
of a new Congregational church in.....
When membership in such church shall be completed,
membership with this church will cease.

Yours in Christian fellowship,

(Signed).....

Clerk.

.....189.....

3. APPLICATION FOR A LETTER OF DISMISSION FROM
ONE CHURCH TO ANOTHER.

To the *Church*
of.....

DEAR BRETHREN: —

Being desirous of uniting with the.....
Church of.....I hereby respectfully request
a letter of dismission and recommendation to that church.

Yours in Christian fellowship,

(Signed).....

Clerk.

.....189.....

4. A LETTER OF DISMISSION AND RECOMMENDATION.

The..... *Congregational Church*
of.....

To the..... *Church*
of..... GREETING: —

This certifies that....., a member in good and regular standing of this Church, is at own request hereby dismissed and affectionately recommended to your fellowship and care, and, when received by you membership with this Church will cease.

By vote of the Church.

.....
Clerk.

....., 189.....

NOTE 1. This letter is good, as a recommendation, for one year only from its date.

2. The clerk of the church accepting this letter is requested to fill out the accompanying blank certificate, and return it to the above address as soon as possible.

5. A CERTIFICATE OF RECEPTION.

To the..... *Congregational Church*
of.....

This certifies that....., recommended to our Christian fellowship by you, was, on the day of....., 189....., received into the membership of the..... Church of.....

Attest,

.....
Clerk.

.....189.....

To the *Pastor*
Clerk of the

.....*Congregational Church*

of.....

Dear Sir :

On the.....day of.....190.....

a letter of dismission and recommendation to the Church of

which you are was voted by

*the*Congregational Church**

of.....and issued by its

Clerk.

You will doubtless be glad to be informed of this fact and to extend a fraternal welcome to the new comer. If there should be any delay in the presentation of this letter, a kindly inquiry by you might be of help.

.....*Clerk.*

.....*A. D. 190.....*

RULES OF ORDER FOR ECCLESIASTICAL MEETINGS ¹

All matters relating to the affairs of any Christian Church, or of the churches assembled together, should be discussed and decided in the simplest and most fraternal way. And yet, in order that progress may be made, and that all may be content with the results, it is necessary that the common rules for conducting business should be observed by all and enforced by the presiding officer.

It ought to be remembered that rules and methods adopted by particular State legislatures, or by Congress, are often variations from and additions to common parliamentary practice, and that such variations should not be regarded in ecclesiastical affairs.

The following rules are taken from the ordinary practice of deliberate bodies in the United States of America. They have been carefully compiled by the editor and submitted to Rev. Alonzo H. Quint, D.D., for his revision and valuable suggestions, and go forth with his approval and endorsement.

I. ORGANIZATION, ETC.

All meetings should be opened with prayer.

In permanent bodies whose officers hold over, the Moderator last elected, if present, should call the meeting to order. In his absence this should be done by the clerk or scribe. In councils the senior pastor present may serve this purpose and call for the election of a moderator. In ordinary gatherings the Chairman of the Committee which has issued the call for the meeting may call to order.

¹ From the Pilgrim Pastor's Manual.

The organization is completed by the election of a secretary, clerk, or scribe, except in bodies having a permanent scribe.

In meetings which are especially important or formal, a temporary moderator and scribe may be elected by *viva voce* vote, and permanent officers afterwards elected by ballot either with or without nomination by any member or by a committee appointed for that purpose.

If the meeting is called to consider special business, the call should be read by the scribe or stated by the Moderator or at his invitation by the Chairman of the Committee which has issued the call.

In a council representing churches, a majority of the churches invited constitutes the quorum. If the number necessary for the transaction of business is
A Quorum not fixed in By-laws, any number present at a properly called meeting are competent to transact business, though often it may be unwise to proceed with a small number.

If a quorum has been present at a meeting, it is presumed to be still present, unless the question is raised by the Chair or any member. If the quorum is not found to be present, the proceedings must be stayed until a quorum is secured ; otherwise the body must adjourn, but it may fix the time and place to which it adjourns.

In local councils the pastors and such delegates present as may be reported are enrolled.

Where written credentials are required,
The Roll the scribe, or a Committee of Credentials, if appointed, forms the roll of those alone who furnish such evidence of their appointment as delegates.¹

¹For form of Credential, see page 200.

A council cannot add to the delegates appointed by a church, nor can a church send delegates other than as invited by the letter-missive.

The natural order, in the absence of any special rule, after the meeting is opened is (1) to read, correct, and approve the records of the last meeting, if
Order of Business any ; (2) to take up unfinished business, reports of committees, etc. ; (3) to receive and act upon propositions for new business.

II. THE MODERATOR.

This is the customary title for the presiding officer in ecclesiastical bodies.

He should state all motions made, secure order in the discussion of them, put them to vote, and announce the results. He is to decide points of order, subject always to vote of the members when an appeal is made.

If two or more persons claim the floor at the same time, he must impartially decide as to who is entitled to it. If in doubt, he may properly give the preference to the one who has not already spoken, or to the one farthest from him.

He cannot speak on the merits of a question without leaving the chair, and calling some other member to preside while he is speaking.

He may vote in all cases where the vote is by ballot, or by yeas and nays, and at other times when his vote would change the result.

If there is no other rule in the By-laws of a church, the pastor acts as Moderator at its meetings, except when matters affecting himself are under consideration, or unless

the church appoints some other person to preside. He has no official position in the meetings of the Society.

III. THE SECRETARY, SCRIBE, OR CLERK.

At State Associations or Conferences the recording officer is usually called the Secretary, in Councils the Scribe, and in the local church the Clerk.

His duties are to form the roll if required, to make and keep a record of the business transacted at the meetings, and usually to take charge of all documents belonging to it ; also to read whatever may be called for with the sanction of the Moderator.

All motions or resolutions upon which a vote has been taken, and such only, should be recorded. Records should be approved by vote of the body whose proceedings they report, and thus declare to be accurate.

If the permanent clerk or scribe is not present, a member should be appointed to fill that office temporarily.

Associations which meet annually and Councils which are dissolved should correct and approve their records before adjournment, and the records should be signed by the Moderator and Clerk.

IV. DISCUSSION.

A member desiring to offer a motion or speak to one should rise and address the Moderator, wait for recognition (the announcement of his name), speak to a question and resume his seat as soon as he has finished.

No discussion is in order unless it be (1) upon a motion already made ; (2) to raise a point of order ; or (3) by unanimous consent.

All personalities or discourtesies of speech or manner between members should be carefully avoided and respect should be shown for the suggestions and decisions of the Moderator. Strict attention should be given to those addressing the meeting, and private conversation should be abstained from. A speaker or member neglecting these proprieties may be called to order by the Moderator, or by any member, and he must conform to them.

A speaker may yield the floor for a question or an explanation by another, but not for continued remarks. In this case he forfeits his claim to it.

Discussion cannot be stopped by calls of "Question! Question!" The proper methods are stated elsewhere.

V. MOTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS.

A motion is a proposal looking to some simple and immediate business ; a resolution is a more formal expression of the opinion or will of an official or public body adopted by vote. A motion, if simple and brief, may be stated verbally, but must be written if it be requested by the Moderator. A resolution should be reduced to writing and read by the clerk before it is discussed or a vote taken.

A motion or resolution should be proposed by one member and seconded by another, so that at least two shall agree in presenting it for discussion or adoption. It should then be clearly stated by the Moderator as made and seconded, and opportunity given for its discussion.

It cannot then be withdrawn except by unanimous consent, but must take its regular course.

When a question is under debate, the Moderator shall receive motions only to adjourn,

To lay on the table,

The previous question,

To postpone to a time certain,

To commit,

To amend,

Or to postpone indefinitely, which several motions shall have precedence in the foregoing order.

VI. MOTIONS CLASSIFIED BY THEIR OBJECTS.¹

1. TO SECURE AN EXPRESSION OF OPINION OR ACTION ON ANY SUBJECT. This is called a main or principal question, and may be introduced when no other question is immediately before the body.

2. TO MODIFY OR IMPROVE THE MAIN PROPOSITION.

(a) *To amend.* This may be done either

(1) by striking out certain words ; or

(2) by adding certain words ; or

(3) by striking out and adding words ; or

(4) by substituting a different proposition on the same subject ; or

(5) by dividing the question so as to get a separate vote on its parts.

Words inserted by the adoption of an amendment cannot be removed nor those stricken out inserted again except, in either case, in connection with additional words.

An amendment may conflict with the spirit of the original motion if only it is on the same general subject ;

¹ This classification with some modifications generally follows "Roberts' Rules of Order."

that is, it must be germane or relevant. It is not considered proper to amend by inserting the word "not," because a direct vote for or against is more simple.

A motion may be entertained to amend an amendment, but not to amend an amendment of an amendment.

Motions which cannot be debated cannot be amended.

The mover and seconder of the principal motion may accept an amendment if no objection is made, but not otherwise. The amendment thus becomes part of the original motion.

When an amendment is under consideration, discussion should be confined to the amendment only.

A motion is sometimes passed which leaves blanks to be filled with numbers, names or dates. If several numbers are suggested, the vote is taken on the largest number or amount first, and so on to the smallest; if dates, that most remote; if names, that first mentioned is voted on first. This being really an amendment, when the blank is filled, a vote should be taken on the motion thus amended.

(b) *To refer to a committee.* This is either that the form of a proposition may be improved, or that the subject may be discussed in committee and definite action recommended.

This motion can be made while an amendment is pending, and it is debatable. It can be amended by defining the number of the committee, determining how it shall be appointed and where it shall report, or by any other instructions. (See Committees.)

3. TO DEFER ACTION.

(a) *By postponing to a definite time.*

(b) *By laying on the table.* This is done that some more pressing matter may be first considered. This motion cannot be debated or amended. The question is by it laid aside until by vote it is taken from the table for discussion and action, and cannot be taken from the table until some other business has intervened. This motion may be made at any time with an immediate vote.

4. TO SUPPRESS THE QUESTION.

(a) *By postponing indefinitely.* This motion cannot be debated or amended.

(b) *By laying on the table* with the expectation that it will not be taken up again. This is an easier way of effecting the same result if there is a majority who desire it.

5. TO SUPPRESS DISCUSSION.

(a) *By moving that the previous question be now taken.* This is done to prevent a minority from protracting discussion needlessly or obstructively. A member may "call for the previous question"; this being seconded, the Moderator says: "Shall the main question now be put?" This motion is open to discussion. By an affirmative vote discussion ceases and the question is at once put to vote, beginning with any pending amendments.

As this is a technical phrase and often not understood, it would be better not to introduce it into ecclesiastical gatherings, but rather to accomplish the same end.

(b) *By moving to close the discussion,* which is exactly equivalent, or to

(c) *Limit the discussion,* by fixing the time to be allowed to each speaker, or the time at which the vote shall be taken, which ought not to be immediate.

6. TO REVISE ACTION ALREADY TAKEN. The motion *to reconsider*. This is the remedy for hasty or uninformed action, or is sometimes used to fix beyond repeal, by its own defeat, action already taken. It can only be moved by one who has voted with the majority. The first motion is to reconsider ; this, if carried, brings up the main question as though it had not been voted on at all. It should be made at the same meeting at which the vote to which it refers was passed, and, in fairness, when there are as many members present as voted at that time. The body retains its right to rescind its action at a subsequent meeting, provided due notice is given of the proposal, and unless prohibited by standing rules.

7. TO FACILITATE OR HASTEN BUSINESS.

(a) *By suspension of the rules*. This should be done only where speed is essential and the action unanimous, and only where the standing rules give authority therefor.

(b) *By "the order of the day."* Where it has been decided that certain questions should come up at a definite time, the order of the day must be announced by the Moderator ; or, in case he neglect to do so, it may be called for by a member and must be taken up. The business thus in order may, of course, be laid on the table or further postponed by vote.

8. TO SECURE ORDER.

(a) *Point of order*. If the Moderator fails to enforce the rules and preserve order, a member can "rise to a point of order," state the matter of which he complains without discussion, and ask for a decision of the Chair.

If a proposition is introduced which a member believes to be outside the proper objects of the meeting, he may

object to its consideration as out of order. This must be done on its first introduction, and is decided by the Moderator.

(b) *Appeal.* Any member may appeal from a decision of the Moderator. The appeal must be seconded, when, the decision having been again stated, with the reasons for it, the appeal may be discussed, the members speaking first and the Moderator closing, not, however, leaving the chair therefor. The question is then put : " Shall the decision of the Chair be sustained?" In regard to indecorum the appeal is undebatable.

(c) *Question of privilege.* This is a question affecting the rights of the meeting, or of any member, who may state the " question of privilege," and the Moderator decides whether it is such a question or not. This must be disposed of by immediate consideration, postponement, or reference to a committee before the discussion which was interrupted can be resumed.

9. TO CLOSE THE MEETING.

(a) *By fixing in advance the time at which to adjourn.*

(b) *By adjourning to a certain time, or " sine die."*

This motion cannot be amended or discussed, unless the motion itself contains a specification of date or place, or unless an adjournment would dissolve the body.

VII. COMMITTEES.

Committees are appointed as the meeting may direct, or under standing rules. They may be nominated by the Moderator or by a nominating committee, in either case to be confirmed by vote ; or the Moderator may be authorized to appoint. An odd number of members is usually appointed to avoid a tie vote in committee.

A committee appointed to carry out instructions should be small, and so composed that a majority shall be favorable to the proposed action. A committee for investigation or deliberation should be large enough to represent those of various opinions, so as to secure ample discussion in the committee.

The first-named person on a committee should call it together, and act as chairman until another chairman is appointed. Usually the body intends that the first-named person on the committee shall be its chairman. If he fails to summon the committee, the second person named may call it together.

If all do not agree, the majority should report in the name of the committee. A minority report may be made and can be by vote of the body substituted for the committee's report.

When a committee to whom any matter may have been referred shall recommend any specific action to the body, or shall desire the body to approve or adopt the sentiments or statements of a report, such proposed action shall always be embodied in resolutions. While many bodies use the term "accept" as equivalent to "adopt," it is much clearer to distinguish between the two. The question should therefore be: Shall the report of your committee be accepted? This, if carried, receives the report from the committee. The question should then be, Shall the resolutions recommended by the committee be adopted? If no resolutions are appended, the report, after acceptance, should be placed on file.¹

A committee is discharged when its report is received.

¹ The National Council of Congregational Churches in the United States, many of our State Associations, and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions explicitly observe this distinction between "accept" and "adopt" in their rules.

A committee may, however, merely report progress and be continued until its final report is made.

When business is referred to a committee with power, it may take final action on the matter referred to at its discretion.

A meeting sometimes resolves itself into a committee of the whole, in order to discuss freely and ascertain the sentiment of the majority. A committee of the whole is governed by the same rules as any other committee. In this case the Moderator does not preside, but calls some other person to the chair. The same end may sometimes be accomplished by agreeing to take an informal vote, before taking formal and final action.

A standing committee is one appointed under general rules to act during a given time on all business relating to the department with which it is intrusted, either to make recommendations to the body which has appointed it or to take final action, according to the terms of its appointment.

VIII. THE VOTE.

For the duty of the Moderator and his rights see the section on that officer.

No question is properly put to vote except by taking the votes both for and against.

In ecclesiastical meetings the vote is usually taken by raising the hand. If the vote is close, so that the Moderator cannot easily decide, the hands may be counted. If the decision is doubted, the vote may be repeated or taken by standing, and tellers may be appointed to make the count.

In elections required to be by ballot, every member must have the opportunity to deposit his own ballot and

to vote for whom he will. Instructions given by a vote of the meeting to one person to cast a ballot for all, deprives the members of their rights and makes the election one by acclamation, and violates the rule. A motion to that effect is therefore out of order. Members are not obliged to vote, but all must have the opportunity to deposit a written or printed ballot.

In elections by ballot tellers are appointed to distribute, collect and count the ballots. They report to the Moderator, or at his request to the meeting. In announcing the result there should be stated the whole number of votes cast, the number necessary to a choice, and at least the number cast for the successful candidate, and for all other candidates, if called for. The Moderator must announce the names of the persons elected. If there is no choice, the number cast for the various candidates is always reported.

A majority vote is always decisive, and no greater proportion can ever be required, unless otherwise fixed by a standing rule.

A majority vote is more than half of all the votes cast. A plurality is more than those cast for any one other candidate.

IX. A TABULATED STATEMENT

MOTIONS WHICH CANNOT BE AMENDED.

To adjourn — except to a specified time.

To amend an amendment.

To lay on the table.

To postpone indefinitely.

The previous question.

To suspend the rules.

To take up a question out of its order.

To take from the table.

MOTIONS WHICH CANNOT BE DEBATED.

To adjourn.

To lay on the table.

A question upon which the previous question has been ordered.

To take up a question out of its order.

To take from the table.

VOTES WHICH CANNOT BE RECONSIDERED.

To adjourn.

To suspend the rules.

An affirmative vote to take from the table.

To reconsider a question.

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