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**MANUAL OF
CONGREGATIONALISM.**

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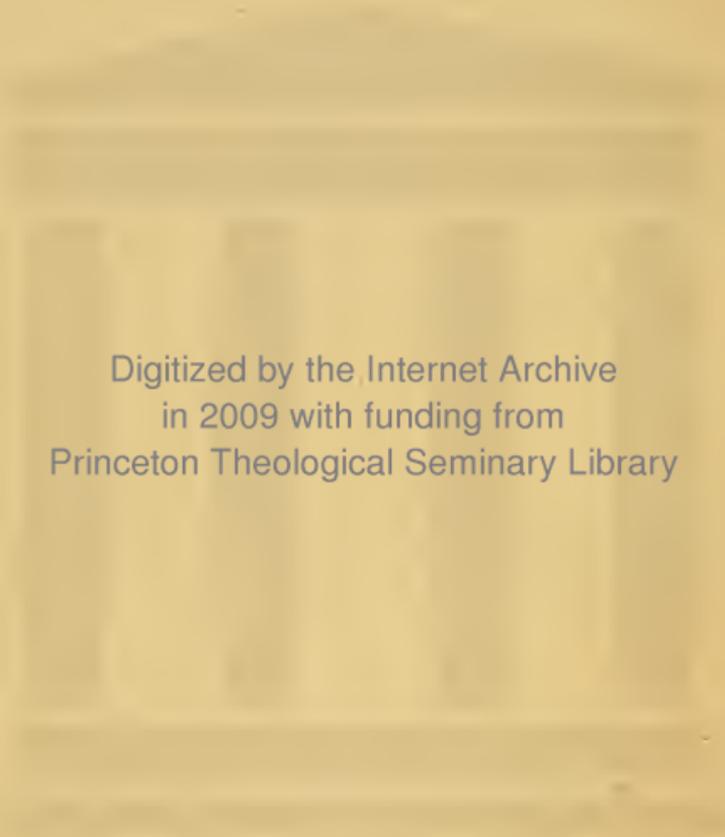
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A manual of
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OF

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G E N E R A L C O N F E R E N C E O F T H E C O N G R E G A -
T I O N A L C H U R C H E S O F M A I N E ,

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A T I O N O F T H E C H U R C H E S .

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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At the meeting of the General Conference, in June 1844, Rev. E. Pond, Rev. J. W. Ellingwood, and Rev. Charles Freeman were appointed a Committee to inquire what should be done to make the members of our churches better acquainted with the peculiar principles, usages, and advantages of Congregationalism. At the next meeting of Conference, this Committee recommended that a *Manual of Congregationalism* should be prepared, with a view to its being submitted to the churches. Their report was accepted by the Conference, and the preparation of the Manual was entrusted to the same Committee.

The following little work is the result of their labors. It was submitted to Conference in June, 1848, and recommended by that venerable body to the consideration of the churches.

In discussing so great a variety of topics, it had been easier to make a large book than a small one. The utmost brevity has been studied. in hope that the

Manual may, on this account, meet with a more extended circulation and a more thorough perusal.

In the preparation of this work, although various authors have been consulted, the Committee are more indebted to Mr. Punchard's valuable treatise on Congregationalism than to any other. The forms in the Appendix, with the exception of the first two, are all transcribed from Punchard.

In obedience to the recommendation of the General Conference, the Committee herewith submit and dedicate the following work to the Congregational churches of Maine ; imploring that the Divine blessing may rest upon it, and that it may be a means, not only of establishing these churches in the faith, but of promoting their order and steadfastness in the gospel.

In behalf of the Committee,

ENOCH POND, Chairman.



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# MANUAL OF CONGREGATIONALISM.

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## SECTION I.

*Signification of the word Church, in the New Testament.*

THE Greek word commonly rendered *church*, in the New Testament, literally signifies a *congregation*, an *assembly*. In its application to Christians, we find the term used in the three following senses :

1. To denote the *general invisible church*, comprising the whole body of true believers, on earth and in heaven. Heb. 12 : 23. Col. 1 : 18, 24.

2. To denote *particular visible churches*, or those bodies of professed believers, which were accustomed to assemble for divine worship and other religious purposes in one place; as the church at Jerusalem, the church at Antioch, the churches of Galatia, and of Macedonia. This

is the more literal, and much the more common use of the word in the New Testament.

3. The word seems also to be used, though not frequently, to denote the *general invisible* church, considered as embodying all the particular visible churches. Rom. 16 : 23. 1 Cor. 12 : 23.

## SECTION II.

*Is any precise form of Church Government instituted in the New Testament ?*

It has been made a question, whether there is any precise model of church organization and government laid down in the scriptures, to which Christians universally are under obligations to conform. By some it has been contended that this *is* the case ; that nothing is left to the discretion of the church ; that we are bound to follow, in every particular, the divine pattern which has been given us. By others it is asserted that we *have no divine pattern* which is at all obligatory ; that Christians are left to their own judgment in this matter ; that it is not only their right, but their duty, to modify the government of the church, according to the circumstances of the age and country in which they live.

The truth evidently lies between these two ex-

tremes. The scriptures do furnish us with at least some *general outlines* of church organization and government, from which no body of Christians is at liberty to depart. They set forth, for example, the *object* of church organization, and the *character* of church members; and no Christians would have a right to form a society for any merely *moral* or *secular* object, and without regard to the *character* of its members, and to call it a church of Christ. Nor has any body of Christians, calling themselves a church, a right to dispense with religious worship and ordinances, or with the ministry and officers of a church. Nor in place of a stated ministry, would the members of a church have a right to assume the pastoral office in rotation, one after another, for a limited time. Nor in place of deacons, would they have a right to substitute a church committee, to be chosen annually, or for a shorter period. The practice of nearly all Christians shows, that they conceive *some* things in regard to church order to be settled in the New Testament; and so settled that they are not at liberty to depart from them.

On the other hand, it would be idle to pretend that every thing relating to church affairs is authoritatively settled, so that nothing is left to the

judgment of Christians. For example, the scriptures ordain that ministers of the gospel are to be supported ; but they do not fix the precise amount of their salaries, or define the mode in which this amount is to be raised. The scriptures enjoin the duty of public worship ; but they do not direct Christians where to meet, or at what hour of the day, or in what shape or form to build their temples. We shall search in vain for any inspired precept, requiring or prohibiting church organs, or church bells, or defining minutely the length or the precise order of the services of the sanctuary. We have the general injunction that “ all things be done *decently and in order*” ; but in what particular order many things are to be done, is wisely left to the judgment of Christians.

The truth in regard to the question seems, therefore, to be this : There are some *general outlines* of church organization and government marked out for us by the pen of inspiration ; and these, so far as they can be discovered, are to be strictly regarded. But in addition to these, God has left many things to be judged of by the light of reason, and to be modified according to circumstances in providence.

## SECTION III.

*Description of the Apostolic Churches.*

IT cannot be doubted that our Savior intended to embody his professed followers on earth, not in one corporate, universal church, but in *particular visible churches*. He prepared the materials for such a church, during his public ministry, which church was fully organized at Jerusalem, soon after his ascension. Acts 1: 13 — 26, and 6: 5, 6.

It was a principal labor of the Apostles to form such churches in the cities and villages where they preached, and where disciples were multiplied. Nearly thirty different churches are spoken of expressly in the New Testament, besides a much greater number which are referred to in more general terms.

The question now arises: *What kind of churches were those which the Apostles planted? How were they organized? After what model were they formed?*

It is possible that, at this distance of time, and with the means of information which we enjoy, these questions do not admit of a full and definite answer. It is likely too, as before re-

marked, that the Holy Spirit has designedly left us in the dark on some points, that we might be at liberty to exercise a wise discretion, and adapt our forms of church organization to the varying circumstances of time and place. But if we cannot know *everything* respecting the Apostles' method of forming churches, we doubtless may know *something*. Some points are made sufficiently clear, if others are left in comparative darkness. And so far as the plan of the Apostles is clearly made known, it is to be regarded as obligatory.

We come back then to the questions above proposed: What kind of churches were those which the Apostles planted? How were they organized? What powers, rights, immunities and privileges did they enjoy?

1. It is certain, in the first place, that the churches of the Apostles were not *national* churches. They were not, like most churches at the present day, tied to the government, — bound hand and foot to the State, so as to become, in the proper sense of the term, *national*. For there was no Christian State or nation then in existence, with which they could be connected. The powers of every government on earth were exerted, not for the church, but against it.

2. The churches planted by the Apostles were not so *confederated, consociated* together, as to constitute properly but *one church*. This is the case with most of the churches at present existing. Thus the Catholic churches all over the earth constitute properly but one church. The same may be said of all the ancient oriental churches; also of the Episcopal and Presbyterian churches, within a given nation or district. Thus we read of the *church*, of England, the *church* of Scotland, and of the Episcopal *church*, and the Presbyterian *church* (not *churches*) of the United States. Now this phraseology, and the thing denoted by it, was altogether unknown in the age of the Apostles. In the Acts we read, not of the church, but “the *churches* of Judea.” In other places, we read of “the churches of Syria,” “the churches of Galatia,” “the churches of Asia,” and “the churches of Macedonia.” And when there were converts in a place adjoining a large city, it was the custom of the Apostles, not to gather them into the church of the city, but to form them into a separate church. Thus at Cenchrea, the port of Corinth, there was a church, distinct from the larger church in the city. Rom. 16: 1.

From these facts it is evident, that the church-

es of a particular country or province were not, in that day, so consociated together as to constitute but *one* church; but they were separate, individual *churches*, a collection of which could properly be spoken of in the plural form. We gather the same fact, also, from history. It is historically certain, that there was no *confederate* organization of the primitive churches, till past the middle of the second century.\*

3. The churches of the Apostles were *voluntary associations*, holding a common belief or creed, and bound together by a solemn compact, or covenant. The Apostles had no compulsory power to bring individuals into the churches, nor did they desire any. All who came forward acted freely, and according to their own convictions of duty.

But though the churches of the Apostles were, in a sense, voluntary associations, they were distinguished, by certain marked peculiarities, from other bodies of the like nature. The individuals composing them must all be, or must seem to be, *truly pious persons*. They all solemnly professed their faith in Christ, and publicly consecrated themselves to his service.

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\* See Murdock's *Mosheim*, Vol. I p. 143.

Then they were associated together on a *peculiar basis*, viz : that of the holy scriptures. They were required to take the scriptures as their rule and guide. They professed to believe whatever the scriptures plainly taught, and promised to obey, so far as they were able, all that the scriptures enjoined.

Again, the *object* for which the primitive disciples entered into a church state was altogether of a peculiar character. It was not to promote any merely secular or moral end, but a spiritual end. It was to maintain the stated worship and ordinances of the gospel ; to promote, by all proper methods, the edification one of another ; and to labor more efficiently than would otherwise be possible for the advancement of Christ's kingdom and the salvation of souls.

It has been stated above, that the churches of the Apostles held a common *belief* or *creed*. By this something more is meant than that they all professed to receive the scriptures. They all professed to *understand* the scriptures substantially alike. They were agreed in their views of the great and fundamental doctrines which the scriptures inculcate. In other words, they had a common *belief* or *creed* ; and they

knew what this was ; so that if any one departed from it, he was understood to depart from the proper basis of the association, and to make himself liable to excision.

It is not known whether, in the days of the Apostles, the creeds of the churches were written, or unwritten. Nor if written, is it likely that they were all phrased precisely alike. Still, they may be said to have had a *common creed*, which, whether written or not, and in whatever manner expressed, was well understood and received by all the members.

It has been stated, too, that the churches of the Apostles were constituted by a solemn *compact* or *covenant*. This is evident from the very nature of the case. We know not, indeed, that the early church covenants were written out ; but whether written or not, they certainly must have existed. There must have been some understanding, agreement, constitution or compact — which held the members together, and from which, if any one openly departed, he was regarded and dealt with as a breaker of covenant.

4. The churches planted by the Apostles were furnished with two classes of *standing officers*, and only two, *pastors* and *deacons*. We speak

here of the ordinary and regular church officers. There were in the primitive age a class of officers, raised up for a particular and extraordinary purpose, and endowed with singular powers and gifts, who had in some sense the care of all the churches, while they were not officially connected with any. They labored chiefly for *the propagation of Christianity* : — in planting new churches, in visiting and confirming them, and in settling regular officers over them. Such were the Apostles and Evangelists. Passing over these, we inquire for the *regular, stated* officers of an Apostolic church ; such as the Apostles ordained in the churches, and settled over them, before they were regarded as duly organized. These were *pastors* and *deacons*.

The first of these classes of officers, viz., *pastors*, is called by several names in the New Testament ; as bishops, elders, teachers, &c., but these terms are all used interchangeably, showing that they refer to the same class of men.

We read of no other standing officers in the primitive churches, except the two classes which have been mentioned ; and we find several passages which prove conclusively that there were no other. For example, when Paul was writing

to Timothy on the very subject of organizing and establishing churches, he gives directions respecting *bishops* and *deacons*, and no others. 1 Tim. 3 : 1 — 13. Phil. 1 : 1. If there had been a third class of officers to be appointed, it is unaccountable that the Apostle should not have referred to them in this connection.

5. The churches planted by the Apostles were in possession of all the *powers* and *rights* which were needful in order to their continued existence, edification, and discipline. They had a right to elect their own *officers*; and this right they exercised even in presence of the Apostles. See Acts 6 : 5. 1 Cor. 16 : 3. They had also the right of *admitting*, *disciplining* and *excluding* members. The Apostle wrote to the church at Corinth to *put away* from among themselves a certain wicked, incestuous person. And when this same person was afterwards to be restored, the Apostle wrote again to the church to restore him.

The Apostolic churches had the right of holding and controlling their *own property*. The church at Jerusalem was early in possession of property to a large amount. For a time, it seems to have held the property of nearly all its members; for “as many as were possessors of

lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the Apostles' feet." It was to take charge of the property of the church, and see to its equitable distribution, that the order of deacons was first instituted. Acts 6 : 3.

In short, the first Christian churches seem to have had the right of managing *all* their internal concerns, subject only to such restrictions and regulations as were imposed on them by Christ himself. They had the right to do all that was necessary to be done, in order to preserve their own existence, and secure to themselves the privileges and blessings of the gospel.

6. The churches of the Apostles were, to some extent, *independent* bodies. They were independent, as to any earthly sovereign or head. They acknowledged no head, no lawgiver, but Christ. So far as jurisdiction and authority were concerned, they were independent one of another. No one church, or body of churches, presumed to exercise authority over the rest. Not even the mother church at Jerusalem, considered simply as a church, in distinction from the Apostles ; nor the church at Rome ; nor any other church, took it upon them, in the primitive age, to dictate to their sister churches, or to extend a spiritual jurisdiction over them.

The independence of the early churches, in the sense here explained, is not only sanctioned by the scriptures, but is most explicitly asserted by ecclesiastical historians. Thus Waddington, an Episcopalian, speaking of the church in the first century says: "Every church was essentially *independent* of every other. The churches, thus constituted and regulated, formed a sort of federative body of *independent religious communities*, dispersed through the greater part of the Roman empire, in continual communication and in constant harmony with each other." \* Mosheim, a Lutheran, thus describes the state of things in the first century: "All the churches, in those primitive times, were *independent bodies*; or none of them subject to the jurisdiction of any other. For though the churches which were founded by the Apostles had the honor shown them to be frequently consulted in difficult cases, yet, they had *no judicial authority, no control, no power of giving laws*. On the contrary, it is clear as the noon-day, that all Christian churches had equal rights, and were in all respects on a footing of equality. †

7. While the Apostolic churches were, in the

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\* Ecc. Hist. p. 43.

† Murdock's Mosheim, Vol. 1, p. 68.

sense explained, independent bodies, they were *in close communion and fellowship one with another*. They were to each other objects of deep interest, and of mutual concern and prayer. As their teachers journeyed from place to place, it is not to be doubted that they had a frequent interchange of pastoral labors. The members, too, when absent from their own churches, were freely admitted to communion in the assemblies of their brethren. The early churches sent Christian salutations, and letters of instruction and warning, one to another. They also sent messengers one to another, and administered relief to each other in distress. They cheerfully bore one another's burthens, and in cases of doubt and difficulty, looked to each other for advice and assistance. In short, the churches of the first century *loved* each other, and they manifested their love, by maintaining an intimate and holy fellowship.

It follows from what has been said, that the churches planted by the Apostles were, in all their essential features, proper *Congregational churches*, and that our Puritan fathers, in establishing Congregationalism, did but revive the primitive, apostolical mode of church government. The proof of this will appear in the following sections.

## SECTION IV.

*Definition and Description of a Congregational Church.*

A Congregational church, as at present constituted, is a company of professed believers in Christ, voluntarily associated together on the basis of the holy scriptures, for the public worship of God, for the observance of Christian ordinances, and for mutual aid and encouragement in the discharge of Christian duties; having the power to elect its own officers, to admit and exclude members, to hold property, and to transact all its appropriate concerns, independently of the control of any man or body of men whatever.

This definition is a long one, consisting of several parts, and will require some explanation.

I. "A Congregational church is a company of *professed believers in Christ.*" No person, not regarding himself as a *believer*, a *true Christian*, should be encouraged to offer himself to the church; and no person, not<sup>s</sup> furnishing<sup>ing</sup> satisfactory evidence to the church of possessing this<sup>s</sup> character, should be admitted, in case he did offer himself. On this point, which is a

fundamental one, the churches of our own times pursue the same course, precisely, with those of the Apostolic age.

2. "A Congregational church is a company of professed believers in Christ, *voluntarily associated together.*" A Congregational church is *not* a voluntary association in the sense of being a mere human institution, with which believers are under no previous obligation to connect themselves. All true Christians are bound to confess Christ before men, and become members of his visible church. But the association is voluntary in this respect, that it was formed and is continued, by the free, voluntary act of those entering it. Persons become members of a Congregational church, not by blood or birth, or the act of any court, civil or ecclesiastical, but by their own full consent, and the consent of the church.

The bond by which the believers are associated in a church state, is their *covenant*. From the nature of the case, every voluntary association must have some compact or agreement, written or unwritten, by which the members are held together. This, in case of the church, is its *covenant*, and as well might we form a temperance society, without a constitution, or

a trading company, without any understanding or articles of agreement, as that kind of association which we call a church, without a covenant. The church covenant is a solemn instrument, and should be a *written one*, by which those entering into it give up themselves to the Lord, and to one another in the Lord, promising to be faithful to one another and to Christ, and (so far as in them lies) to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

3. In the definition above given, a Congregational church is said to be established "*on the basis of the scriptures.*" This implies two things: (1.) That the members of a church profess to receive the scriptures as their *only rule of faith and practice*, and (2.) That they regard their peculiar mode of church organization and government as resting substantially on *scriptural authority*. As remarked in a former section, Congregationalists do not profess to find a *full and precise* model of church organization marked out for them in the New Testament, leaving nothing to be controlled or modified by circumstances. Nor, on the other hand, do they believe that inspiration has given us *no light* on this subject, and that everything is left to mere human discretion. They think they

find in the scriptures at least the *great outlines* of church organization and government, and by these they profess to be guided in the formation of their own churches.

4. According to our definition, believers are associated in a church, "for the public worship of God, for the observance of Christian ordinances, and for mutual aid and encouragement in the discharge of Christian duties." The grand *object* or *objects* of church organization are here brought into view; and it will be seen that they are all such as to require an *association*. Secret worship, Christians may and should maintain alone; but *public* worship and Christian ordinances they *cannot* maintain, but in connection with others. They may also perform various Christian duties in a private way; but to sustain the *whole* Christian character and life, and to do it to the best advantage, they need the countenance and co-operation of others. They need the direction, the strength, the grace, the assistance, which can be found only in connection with the church of Christ.

Among the ordinances to be observed in the church are *Baptism* and *The Lord's Supper*. These are expressly instituted by Christ, and with them no church is at liberty to dispense.

5. Our definition states, that a Congregational church has “the power to *elect its own officers, to admit and exclude members, to hold property, and to transact all its appropriate concerns, independently of the control of any man or body of men whatever.*” The right to elect their own officers is inherent in all voluntary associations. We have seen that it was exercised in the Apostolic churches, and by the direction of the Apostles themselves. (Acts 6: 3.) It was long continued in the ancient churches, and was one of the last that, in the progress of ecclesiastical usurpation, was relinquished. Origen represents elders as “*chosen* to their office” by the churches over which they preside. Cyprian insists largely on the right of churches to choose their own officers; affirming that this was the practice, not only of the African churches, but of those in the other provinces of the Roman Empire. (Epis. 68.) Socrates, speaking of the election of Chrysostom, says: “He was *chosen* by the common vote of all, both clergy and people.” (Ecc. History, book 1, chap. 7.)

The right of admitting and excluding members is held in our churches precisely as it was in the churches of the Apostles

The right of holding property is not only claimed by our churches, but from the first settlement of New England, this right has been sanctioned by the laws. According to existing laws, "the deacons of the several Protestant churches (not Episcopal) are *incorporated*, to take in succession all grants and donations, whether real or personal, made either to their several churches, the poor of their churches, or to them and their successors, and to sue and defend in all actions touching the same."

Indeed, all the powers claimed in our definition for the churches, are such as naturally belong to every voluntary association, and may be presumed to belong to *the church*, unless expressly prohibited in the scriptures. But so far from being prohibited, they are, as we have seen, expressly recognized.

The principle of *independency*,\* spoken of above, and which existed in the Apostolical churches, may be regarded as the *peculiar, characteristic feature of Congregationalism*. It is

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\* Our churches are not independent in the sense of being insulated bodies, holding no connection or communion with other churches, and no responsibility to them. But they ARE independent, so far as JURISDICTION is concerned, each having the right to manage its own concerns, independent of foreign dictation or control.

this which distinguishes Congregationalism from every other form of ecclesiastical government.

With regard to this principle of independency, the churches of Christendom, at this day, are divided into two classes. Those of the first class *retain* this principle, each church managing its own concerns in its own way, independent of any foreign jurisdiction or control. In this class are included the proper Congregational churches, the Baptist churches generally, if not universally, and perhaps some others.

The churches of the second class are governed in a different way. By being united with the State, or by being so confederated together as to destroy their independency, if not their individuality, *the particular churches have come under a jurisdiction foreign to themselves.* There is an earthly power somewhere, *out of their own body*, which may give them laws, and to whose behests and dictation they are in duty bound to submit. This power may be vested in a Pope, or an Emperor, or a bench of Bishops, or a Methodist General Conference, or a Presbyterian General Assembly. At any rate, it is *out of the church*; so that the individual church is no longer independent of foreign jurisdiction. It can no longer manage its own proper con-

cerns, without foreign interference and control. It can no longer say that its only law-giver is Christ, for there is an *earthly* power somewhere, out of itself, to whose laws it is subject, and to whose will it must submit.

Of the two classes of churches here described, *the first* are formed substantially after the primitive model. They are organized and governed according to the Apostolical plan.

The original, Apostolical independence of the churches continued unbroken through the first century after Christ, and through a considerable part of the second century. It began to be invaded, past the middle of the second century, by the establishment of *synods*—not, like our Congregational Councils and Church Conferences, for consultation and advice—but with *legislative* and *judicial* powers. These bodies came together to enact laws for the churches, and to prescribe for them rules of faith and conduct.\* The independency of the churches was

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\*“These synods,” says Mosheim, “of which no vestige appears before the middle of the second century, changed nearly the whole form of the church. For in the first place, the ancient rights and privileges of the people were by them very much abridged; and on the other hand, the influence and authority of the Bishops were not a little augmented.” “Originally, these synods or councils had no jurisdiction, but were

first invaded—broken in upon in this way ; and it continued to be invaded more and more, till at length it utterly disappeared from the church. And when this was gone, there was no hindrance to the progress of usurpation, until most of the churches became merged in one universal church, and all power was concentrated in the lordly Bishop of Rome.

During the long and terrible reign of Popish darkness and superstition, we find almost no churches, throughout the Christian world, organized after the primitive model. Nor, indeed, could we reasonably expect to find any. The whole form of the church was changed, and the ancient liberties and privileges of Christians were utterly taken away.

Soon after the reformation from Popery, the primitive doctrine of church independency was revived. It appeared in England in the sixteenth century, and was planted in this country at its earliest settlement by the Pilgrims. In-

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mere conventions of delegates, met to consider and agree upon matters of common concernment. But they soon began to *claim power ; to enact and enforce laws*, and to hear and *decide controversies*. And the bishops, instead of appearing as the representatives of their churches, claimed authority from Christ to *bind and control them.*" (Murdock's Mosheim, vol. 1., p. 143.)

deed, it was the *grand object* of the Pilgrims in coming to this country, to be able to establish churches on what they conceived to be the *primitive, Congregational plan*. They did not differ from the established church of England, in point of doctrines. It was *church order and government* which constituted the main topic of dispute. It was for their peculiar opinions on *these subjects*, that our forefathers were persecuted in their native land, and were driven, first to Holland, and afterwards to the wilds of America. No wonder, then, that the peculiar principles of Congregationalism should be dear to us, their descendants; believing, as we do, that they are substantially the principles of the Apostles, and remembering all the sacrifices and sufferings which our venerable ancestors endured for the sake of them.

## SECTION V.

### *The question of Creeds.*

THE question of creeds naturally divides itself into two parts :

1. Should a Congregational church have a written creed? And if so,
2. What and how much should that creed contain?

It certainly is desirable, that those who are to unite habitually in the most solemn acts of worship, and listen to the same public instructions, should be *agreed* in the essential articles of religious belief. And as every Christian who believes any thing, has a creed, so every society of Christians, which holds any articles of faith in common, has a *common creed*. It *must* have one. In terms, it may *abjure* creeds; but it really has one, after all; else its members are not agreed in one single article of religious belief. The only question concerning it is—and this can hardly be a question: Shall the creed be *written* or *unwritten*? Shall it be made a matter of *public record*, to which all concerned may have liberty of appeal; or shall it be left to uncertain tradition, and to the hazard of being perverted and forgotten?

We have seen that the churches of the apostles had each of them its creed. These creeds were *early* written, though not so early, perhaps, as the Apostolic age. Several of them, as the creeds of the churches of Jerusalem, of Antioch, of Alexandria, and of Rome, are still extant.\* So every Congregational church should have a creed; and the peace and purity of the

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\* See Henry's Chris. Antiq. p. 102.

church require that it should be a *written creed*, understood and assented to by all the members.

It is objected, indeed, that this is putting a creed, of mere human authorship, in the place of scripture. But this is not true. A written creed is *never* to be *substituted in place of scripture*, but should be regarded as a concise and convenient expression of what is deemed to be *the sense* of scripture. To the church adopting it, it is not itself the standard of faith, but a *transcript*, an *epitome* of that infallible standard, which God has given us in his word.

It is objected again, that a church creed is a *restraint*, an *infringement* upon the rights of conscience. But this again is not true. No church has a right to *impose* its creed upon others. This would be a violation of the rights of conscience. But when a church does no more than *propose* its creed for consideration, leaving those to whom it is proposed, at full liberty, either to adopt it, and unite with that particular church, or to reject it, and enter into some other communion; obviously, there is no injury done to conscience, and no restraint imposed upon religious freedom.

With regard to the question, how much should be embraced in the creed of a church; some

have insisted that it should contain no articles, a belief of which was not *essential to piety*, so that by no possibility a real Christian should ever be excluded; while others have thought that it should be a concise expression of all the more essential doctrines of the gospel. We incline to the latter of these opinions; and for the following reasons:

1. It is no easy matter to determine what amount of truth in the understanding is absolutely essential to piety in the heart; and consequently (on this ground) what amount it would be proper to retain in our church articles, and what to exclude. Many think that true piety is possible, in connection with some forms of Unitarianism and Universalism; others extend their charity so far as to embrace the better sort of heathens and infidels. If the creed of the church must be so curtailed, that by no possibility any pious person can be excluded, it is doubtful whether aught would remain. But,

2. Has a church the *right*, in framing its articles, to omit any part of what it conceives to be *essential* in the system of Christian doctrine and practice? The Bible is a revelation from God, which he has given to his people for their good; and it is incumbent on them to receive it

all. And in framing, as the basis of church union, an epitome of what the Bible is supposed to teach, have they a *right* to omit certain doctrines and duties which they conceive to be of vital importance, merely out of respect to the opinions of others? Are the opinions of others to be their guide in this matter, or their own sober conviction as to what the word of God contains? And can it be right for them, out of a regard to others, to base a church on one half, or one quarter, of what they honestly believe to be God's system of revealed truth, and omit the rest?

3. Nor is this all the difficulty of the case. It may be further inquired, whether a creed, thus formed, could with any propriety be denominated *the creed of the church*. The creed of the church is *the belief* of the church. But in the case supposed, the written articles embrace only a part, perhaps but a small part, of the belief of the church; so that between the published creed and the real creed there is not an agreement. Here, for example, is a body of Christians, who believe that the doctrine of election is an essential part of the system of revealed truth, and that infant baptism is of Divine institution; but in framing their articles they omit both these points, under the impression that

if retained, they may be a means of excluding some real Christians. It may be asked now whether their articles are *the real creed of the church*, or only a maimed and imperfect part of it; and whether, in proposing it as the creed of the church, they are not chargeable with dishonesty.

Congregationalism is not, as some suppose, a mere form of ecclesiastical *order* and *government*. A Congregational church is a body of Christians, governed, to be sure, in a particular way, but holding also, a particular system of *religious doctrines*. So the matter was understood by those fathers of Congregationalism, the first settlers of New England. The Westminster Confession of Faith was adopted by the same synod which framed the Cambridge Platform, in the year 1648, and may be regarded as an integral part of the Platform. (See Preface to the Platform.) The same doctrines were again publicly assented to by the churches, in the year 1680, in what has been called the New England Confession. And every Congregational church now should profess substantially the same. Every such church should have a creed; which creed should set forth the same system of faith—expressed, it may be, variously, but distinctly

—which is contained in the celebrated Westminster Confession, or in the confession of 1680.

This creed, as before remarked, Congregationalists are not entitled to *impose* upon others. But they are entitled to hold it, without offence, as constituting what they conceive to be the faith of the gospel, and the proper basis of Congregationalism. And they are entitled to do whatever they consistently and peaceably can to *propagate* it, believing it to be the truth as it is in Jesus.

## SECTION VI.

### *The Formation of Churches.*

WITH regard to the number requisite to constitute a church, no precise rule can be given. There should be members enough to transact the business and answer the purposes of the organization; while the number should not be too great to assemble conveniently in one place.

In new settlements, or in circumstances of necessity, it is competent to a Missionary to constitute a church; or a church may be formed, by the free consent and action of the members themselves. But in all common cases, the organization of a church is not effected without the aid and the sanction of an ecclesiastical coun-

cil. The mode of procedure is substantially as follows :

Let the individuals proposing to constitute a church, have free conversation one with another, learn each others' views, become mutually and spiritually acquainted, and be much in prayer for the Divine direction and blessing. Let such of them as are members of other churches obtain letters of dismissal and recommendation, for the purpose of constituting a separate church. A committee of brethren should also be appointed, to prepare a confession of faith and covenant, to send out letters for the convening of the council, and to bring the case before the council when it shall be convened.

At the time and place appointed for the meeting of the council, the individuals proposing to unite in church fellowship, should all be present, with the record of their previous proceedings, with a copy of their covenant and articles, with their letters of dismissal and recommendation, and prepared to answer any questions, or to give any information, which may assist the council in coming to a right understanding of the case submitted to them.

The council on these occasions is organized

in the usual way ; the papers are read ; the individuals proposing to be constituted a church, are examined to the satisfaction of the council ; and the circumstances rendering the formation of the church desirable, are explained. If the path of duty appears plain, the council vote to proceed to the organization of the church, and fix a time and place for the public exercises. These are commonly—in addition to the usual devotional exercises—a sermon ; the constituting of the church by some member of the council ; a prayer of consecration ; an address or charge to the new church ; and an expression of the fellowship and communion of sister churches.

## SECTION VII.

### *Church Officers—their Election and Qualification.*

THE regular, standing officers of a Congregational church, like those of the Apostolic churches, are *pastors* and *deacons*. In the early days of our country, there were also, in most of the churches, *ruling elders*. But as there is no clear scriptural authority for this class of officers, and no particular necessity for them, they have not been continued. The officers of a Congregational church are elected in

open church meeting, and by a major vote of the brethren.

In some few instances the right of the churches to elect their pastors has been invaded through the action of parishes; but all such interference is to be resisted.

Most of the Congregational churches of New England are associated with parishes, in the support of public worship. This connection is a convenient one, and need be no embarrassment to either church or parish, if the powers and rights of each are well understood, and carefully distinguished. The church is a purely *ecclesiastical body*, of Divine institution, and existing only for spiritual ends. The parish is a *civil corporation*,—in connection with the church, but yet distinct from it, and instituted for the greater security and convenience of all concerned, in the maintenance of public worship. A minister, settled in the usual way over a church and parish, sustains a particular relation to each. He is *pastor* of the church, and *minister* of the parish; the officer and the servant of both. So distinct are these relations, that not unfrequently one of them terminates, while the other remains. His connection with the parish ceases, while his pastoral relation to the church continues; or *vice versa*.

In the election of a minister, settled in the usual way, neither church nor parish has any occasion, or any excuse, for encroaching on the rights of the other. The church chooses its pastor, and the parish its minister; and if, after repeated trials, they cannot agree to elect the same person, the difficulty will be likely to result in their separation.

The regular mode of proceeding is, for the church to meet first and elect a pastor; then notify the parish of what has been done, and ask its concurrence. If the parish concur, as is almost always the case, the work is finished. But if not, the church may reconsider its former vote, and turn its attention to some other man. If, after repeated trials of this kind, it is found impossible for the two bodies to agree (a contingency which very seldom occurs), it may be necessary for them, as before remarked, to dissolve their connection.

The scriptural mode of *qualifying* church officers is by *ordination*. The first deacons were ordained; (see Acts 6: 6.) and deacons in our own time should be set apart to their responsible office, if not by formal ordination, at least by solemn consecration.

Ministers of the gospel should be ordained.

Until they are ordained, they are not properly invested with the ministerial office, and not qualified to administer the sacraments of the church.

As an abstract right, to be exercised only in cases of extreme necessity, it may be said that a church may ordain its own pastor. Still, this is not the ordinary or the *regular* mode of proceeding. In the New Testament, as also in the first ages of the church, ordination was regarded as the work of ministers. Indeed, it is properly *committed* to ministers; and should not be undertaken by others, except in cases of such extreme necessity as knows no law.

The practice of the New England churches, in convening a council for the ordination of their pastors, is one of long standing, and of most happy influence. It tends to promote harmony and fellowship among churches and ministers, and should not, in any practicable circumstances, be laid aside.

## SECTION VIII.

### *Admission and Dismission of Members.*

• IT has been before stated, that a Congregational church is a company of *professed believers in Christ*—that no person not regarding himself as a believer, should be encouraged to offer him-

self to the church ; and that no person not furnishing satisfactory evidence to others of being a believer, should, under any circumstances, be admitted. (Section iv.) It follows from these principles, that the church is bound, in some way, to *examine* those who are admitted to its communion, and to obtain satisfaction on the question of their piety. This examination may be conducted in different ways. Some give the relation of their religious experience verbally ; others in writing. Some are examined before the whole church ; others by a select committee of the church. The object of the examination, however conducted, is *satisfaction* as to the sincerity and piety of the candidate, and his fitness to become a member of the church. *Satisfaction* on these points the church is bound to seek and obtain ; and such satisfaction every one asking admission to the church ought to be willing to give.

If, after examination, the church is satisfied, they then vote that the candidate be publicly *propounded* for admission. The object of this is, to give any person, having aught against him, or knowing any good reason why he should not be admitted to church fellowship, opportunity to signify the same to the pastor. If after being

propounded the usual time—which is commonly two weeks—no objection is made to the admission of the candidate, he is then received to the bosom of the church. He publicly assents to the church covenant and articles of faith; receives baptism, if he have not before been baptized; and solemnly promises to walk with the church, in the observance of all the duties of a religious life.

If, on a change of residence, or for any other sufficient reason, a church member wishes to remove his relation to another church, he applies for a letter of dismissal and recommendation. If his standing is good, and his reasons are satisfactory, and the church with which he proposes to become connected is evangelical, his request is granted. The required letter is given. It is to be understood, that until he is received by the church to which the letter is addressed, he remains a member of the church from which the letter was taken, and is subject to its watch and discipline, as before.

Persons sometimes apply for a dismissal and a *general* recommendation, without specifying any particular church. But such a request should not in ordinary cases be granted; since the church giving the letter cannot tell what

use may be made of it. It may be presented to a church which they deem heretical, or with which, on other accounts, they have no fellowship.

Still more improper is it for persons to request (as they sometimes do) a dismissal, without any recommendation. They wish to be 'given back to the world, and to become, so far as it concerns their church relation, as they were before. But such persons ought to understand, that this is *impossible*. 'The church *cannot* grant their request, if they would. When an individual is admitted to the church, he enters into covenant with *God*, as well as with his brethren; and no church is competent, by its simple vote, to discharge him from his covenant obligations to *God*.\*

Persons should be given to understand, when they join the Christian church, that there is no getting out of it, except by exclusion. They may transfer their relation from one church to another; but they can never again be given back to the world, and become as they were before.

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\* "The church cannot make a member no member, but by excommunication." (Cambridge Platform, Chap. 13, Sect. 7.)

## SECTION IX.

*Dismission of a Pastor.*

WHEN a pastor is dismissed, it is either at his own instance, or that of his church and people. If, for any reason, a pastor desires the dissolution of his pastoral relation, he lays the matter before his church, and asks them to unite with him in convening a council, to which the question may be submitted. If the church are unwilling, at once to comply with his request, they may appoint a committee to confer with their pastor, and endeavor to dissuade him from his purpose. If, however, he cannot be dissuaded, and the church think it best to accede to his request, they will appoint a committee to assist in the selection and call of a mutual council.

This council may be called merely to *advise* in the premises, leaving the act of dismission, should they advise to it, to be passed by the church; or the whole question may be referred beforehand to the council, and thus supersede the necessity, in case a dismission is determined on, of any further action on the part of the church. The latter is, perhaps, the more common prac-

tice in our churches; and on some accounts it is to be preferred. Either is better than for a church to dismiss its pastor, and then call a council merely to sanction what has been done. It is objection enough to *this* method—which, in some instances, has been pursued—that it tends to defeat the very design of councils, and is treating them with disrespect.

If a church, or a considerable part of it, should think the removal of their pastor desirable, the regular procedure would be, not to drive him off, or to attempt his removal by the slow process of starvation, but for some of the principal members of the church to converse freely and frankly with him, state their difficulties, and suggest to him the propriety of his asking a dismissal. Should he decline to do so, they might then request him to call a meeting of the church, for the purpose of mutual consultation and action, in reference to the matter. Should the church be of opinion that a dismissal of the pastor was desirable, they would request him to unite with them in calling a mutual council, to whom the question might be referred. If he should decline the offer of a mutual council, the church would then be entitled to call an *ex parte* council, by whose aid the matter might be ad-

justed upon Christian and Congregational principles.

Every dismissed minister should receive a *recommendation* from the council which dismisses him; else his standing in the ministry is no longer unexceptionable.

## SECTION X.

### *Church Discipline.*

THE discipline of a church, in the sense in which we here use the term, has respect to that course of treatment which churches are called upon to pursue toward *offending members*; including instruction, warning, admonition, reproof, and excommunication.

The proper subjects of church discipline, then, are *offending members*; — those who have entered into covenant with the church, have placed themselves under its watch and care, and are known to walk in a disorderly manner. With such persons, the church is bound to have recourse to discipline. It is bound to take measures with them, with a view to their reformation or exclusion.

The power of discipline, at least in its ulterior stages, is lodged in the church. It is the

duty of individual members to use the milder methods of warning and reproof; but when these fail, it belongs to the church, as a body, publicly to admonish, and (if need be) to exclude the offender. This is the *natural* right of the churches. As it belongs to them to admit members, they ought to have the right, in case individuals prove unworthy, to exclude them. And this right, we have seen, is expressly recognized in the New Testament. To the churches of the Apostles was entrusted, and by them was exercised, the power of discipline. (See Section iii.)

The *ends* to be answered by church discipline are, first, the *recovery* (if it be possible) of the offender. He has broken his covenant, has gone astray, and is in danger of perishing in his sins. His brethren are under obligations to watch over him, to care for him, and to do all in their power for his recovery.

But if he cannot be restored, they are bound to regard the second great end of discipline, which is *the honor of religion, and the purity of the church*. By the fall of a church member, religion is disgraced, and the church is defiled; and there is no way in which the evil can be re-

moved, but by the *recovery* of the offender, or his *exclusion*. He must either make confession of his sins, and return to his duty, or he must be separated from the communion of the church.

It has been made a question, how far the direction of Christ (Mat. 18 : 15 — 17) is to be regarded as a *rule* of church discipline. In reply, we think it may be safely said, that the *spirit* of this rule should be regarded always, and the *letter* of it, so far as circumstances will allow. Wherever it is practicable, there should be, in the first instance, *private* admonition. Let some suitable person go to the offender, in a private and friendly manner, and tell him of his fault, and urge him to repentance and reformation. Let him, if need be, *repeat* this labor of love. If the offence is strictly *private*; if it is known to only one member of the church, and no sufficient proof of it can be adduced, the individual knowing of it can labor only in a private way. He cannot, with propriety or safety, bring it before the church. If he cannot, by private dealing, gain his brother, he must leave him to the decisions of the judgment day. Nor may he, on account of the offence of his brother, absent himself from the communion of the church. To do this would be to commit an

offence against the whole church, and expose himself to censure, without any excuse or benefit.\*

But if the offence is not strictly private; if it is susceptible of proof; then, when the incipient steps have failed of their object, the case must be brought before the church. A written complaint should be lodged with the pastor, or presiding officer, with the request that it be presented as soon as practicable. If the church vote to receive and act upon the complaint (as in all ordinary cases they should do), a day is set apart for trial; when the complainant is to establish his charges by proof. If the church decide that the charges, or any considerable portion of them, are sustained, the offender is suspended from communion, and an admonition is sent to him. If he does not "hear the church" in this, a second admonition is sometimes sent. (See Tit. 3: 10.) If this is disregarded, he is then formally and solemnly excommunicated.

If the offender is dissatisfied with the decision of the church, he has the right of appeal to

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\* For *no* case of offence or grievance can a professing Christian — so long as he believes it his duty to remain connected with a church — be justified in turning away from its communion.

a mutual council; and it is the duty of the church, ordinarily, to unite with him in such a council, if he desires it. Should the church refuse his request for a council, he has a right to call an *ex parte* council. It would not be competent to the members of the *ex parte* council, however, to *dictate* to the church, or to attempt forcing their decisions upon it. They could only express their opinion, and give *advice*. But in case their advice was rejected by the church, they might afford relief to the aggrieved individual in some other way.

The satisfaction to be required of an offender is *evidence of repentance, confession of sin, and reformation of life*. While the offence is private, a confession may be private. But when the offence has been brought before the church, or in any way has become public, a confession before the church must be required. Nothing short of this can wipe away the dishonor done to religion, and remove scandal from the church. Every true penitent will *desire* that his confession should be as public as his offence. Still, due care should be taken, that the feelings of penitents be not needlessly wounded in cases of this nature, and that feelings of unkindness and revenge, which may be harbored

against them, be not intentionally consulted or gratified.

Excommunicated persons should be considered, not as released from their covenant obligations, but as *breakers of covenant*. They should be regarded with feelings of sorrow and concern, and should be made the subjects of special prayer. Where any good is likely to result from such a course, they are to be avoided and shunned. They are to be denied the society and countenance of Christians, that they may be humbled and ashamed. We see no good reason, however, for the scrupulousness which some have manifested, in refusing to eat with them, and in denying them the customary civilities of life.\*

It is incumbent on the church, and on all its members, to seek the good of excommunicated persons, and to be ready at all times to accept of their penitence, to rejoice in their reformation, and to welcome them back to the bosom of the church.

The excommunications treated of above are

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\* The eating spoken of in 1 Cor. 5 : 11, is not, we think, that of a common meal, but *the Lord's supper* ; and the direction of the Apostle is ; " If any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner ; let such an one *be put out of the church*, as unworthy to sit with his brethren at the table of the Lord."

such as are inflicted for what are sometimes called the *greater offences*, as heresy and immorality. There is another class of offences, for which, if persisted in, our churches commonly vote a *withdrawal of fellowship*. But this withdrawal of fellowship is but a milder form of excommunication. Indeed, the *form* of excommunication, in every case, should be based, obviously, on the nature of the offence. In case of an aggravated offence, the vote of exclusion should convey a sterner rebuke, and be one of greater severity, than when the offence is of a less flagrant character.

It follows from what has been said, that church discipline is, throughout, a work of love. In the spirit of love it should be undertaken and pursued; and thus it should be regarded by all concerned in it. The church is no place in which to seek or to take revenge. And those who endeavor faithfully to maintain the discipline of the church should not be accused or suspected of seeking revenge. When a Christian wanders, it may be insensibly, from the path of duty, what more convincing evidence of love can his brethren afford him, than in kindly taking him by the hand, and endeavoring to restore him. But this is church discipline.

## SECTION XI.

*Discipline of Pastors.*

IT is required, on sound Congregational principles, that *every pastor should be a member of his church*, and subject, as such, to its watch and discipline. This certainly was the case in the first Christian churches,\* and in the churches of our fathers in the early days of New England. "When a pastor has fallen into scandal," says Cotton Mather, "the brethren that are acquainted with it *proceed as they would with another brother in such cases*, only with more special terms of respect, as the relation of a father may call for." So the Cambridge Platform, speaking of an incorrigibly offending elder, says: "As the church had power to *call him to office*, so they have power to *remove him from office*, the council of the churches, where it may be had, directing thereto; and being now but a member, in case he add contumacy to his sin, the church that had power to receive him *into their*

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\* In the first Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, the church at Corinth is censured, not for having exceeded its *powers* in deposing certain elders, but for having deposed them without sufficient reason, and accordingly the church is advised to restore them.

*fellowship*, hath also the same power to *cast him out*, that they have concerning any other member." (Chap. 10, Sect. 6.)

Though a church may possess the right, abstractly considered, of deposing and excommunicating its pastor, and in very extreme cases may be called to exercise this right; yet the usages of our churches direct to a different method. They never proceed to the final issue without the advice and concurrence of a council.

Should a church be called to pursue a course of discipline with its pastor, all the preparatory steps may be taken, as in the case of a private member. The charges may be brought before the church, and the church, after a candid hearing, may vote that the charges are sustained. But in view of the great importance and solemnity of the business, they will here pause, and invite their pastor to unite with them in calling a mutual council. If he refuses, the church may call an *exparte* council. This council—mutual or *exparte*, as the case may be—examines all the doings of the church, and hears all the evidence in the case. If they find the pastor innocent, they of course clear him, and advise the church to do the same. But if satisfied of his

guilt, and of the regularity of the measures which have been pursued, they proceed to depose the unworthy man from the ministry, and advise the church to excommunicate him. The church follows the advice of council, and thus terminates the melancholy business.

Some have thought it *unsafe* for a minister to be a member of his own church, and to be under the watch and care of the brethren. But how unsafe? The watch of his brethren will be a blessing to him, so long as they continue his friends. And if they become his enemies, they cannot injure him; since he is sure, in any event, of the protection of a council. And more than this he could not have, in case he was not a member of his church.

## SECTION XII.

### *Fellowship of Churches.*

WE have before shown that the Apostolic churches, though independent of each other in respect to jurisdiction, yet practiced a close intercommunion and fellowship. And the same may be said of the Congregational churches of

New England. The following methods of church communion are laid down and enlarged upon in the Cambridge Platform, Chap. 15 :

1. "By way of *mutual care*, (in taking thought for one another's welfare."

2. "By way of *consultation* one with another, when we have occasion to require the judgment and counsel of other churches." Our whole system of councils is based on this mode of church fellowship.

3. "By way of *admonition*, when a church neglects discipline, or becomes corrupt." This third way of communion, as it used to be called, and which was not unfrequently resorted to in former times, has latterly fallen very much into disuse. The admonition of churches, so far as it prevails, is practiced in a more private and less formal way. And the withdrawing of fellowship, in case of corruption, is done more silently, by individual churches, each acting on its own responsibility. And yet the work *is done*, and done *effectually*. The separation of the Orthodox from the Unitarian churches of New England, which has taken place within the last thirty years, is complete proof of this.

4. "By admitting members of sister churches, to occasional communion one with another."

5. "By letters of dismission and recommendation from one church to another."

6. "By affording relief and succor one to another, either of able members to furnish them with officers, or of outward support to the necessities of poorer churches, as did the churches of the Gentiles to the poor saints at Jerusalem."

The mutual relation and fellowship of the churches was strenuously maintained by the fathers of New England. They abhorred any such independency as *insulated* the individual church, and interrupted its fellowship with sister churches. And this feature of the system has been tenaciously held by all consistent Congregationalists to the present time. The intimate and holy fellowship of churches is no more inconsistent with their Christian independence, than the friendly intercourse of neighbors is inconsistent with their being, each and all of them, independent citizens. We have no right, as individuals, to exercise authority over our neighbors, nor they over us. Still, it is proper that we should maintain a mutual friendly intercourse, and perform towards each other all the offices of neighborhood and kindness.

MANUAL OF  
SECTION XIII.*Ecclesiastical Councils.*

As frequent mention has been made of ecclesiastical councils, and as they enter essentially into our system of church government, it will be necessary to give a brief description of these bodies.

They consist of pastors and delegates from particular churches,\* called together by letters missive from some church, or some part of a church, or individuals proposing to form a church; and for some distinctly specified object. The councils occurring among us may be divided into three classes: those called, not by parties, but by *whole bodies of Christians*; those called by a *mutual agreement* of parties; and those called by *one party*.

The objects for which councils are summoned together, are such as these: to organize churches; to ordain or install ministers; to dismiss ministers; and when the case requires it, to depose them; to settle difficulties between a pastor and his people, or between different members of the church; to afford relief to aggrieved, excluded members, &c.

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\* Sometimes a minister without charge is constituted, by letter, a member of a council.

The *advice* of a properly convened ecclesiastical council, though not absolutely binding, is justly entitled to great weight, and should not be rejected but for the most cogent reasons. Nor is it true, as is commonly said, that Congregational councils are, in all cases, *merely advisory bodies*. They are sometimes constituted, by the very terms of the letter missive, *a board of reference*. Important questions are *submitted to them to decide*, and the parties are holden to abide the decision. This is always the case with ordaining councils; and is frequently so in the case of councils for the dismissal of ministers, and for the adjustment of pending ecclesiastical difficulties.

It is one of the most important rules for the regulation of councils, that an *ex parte council is never to be called, until a mutual council has been proposed and refused*. When subjected to a fair interpretation of this law, we see no valid objection to *ex parte councils*. They are an established part of our ecclesiastical system, and it would seem, a *necessary* part. Without this provision, a mutual council might be unreasonably and obstinately refused, and an injured pastor, or church, or brother of the church, might be left to suffer without redress.

We only add in respect to councils, that they are not standing bodies. They are called for a particular, specified purpose; and when this purpose is accomplished, and their work is done, their existence terminates.

#### SECTION XIV.

##### *Other Ecclesiastical Organizations.*

##### 1. *Synods.*

IN the early days of our country, *Congregational Synods* were frequently assembled. They were called together, sometimes by the general court, and sometimes by the chief magistrate. They consisted of pastors and delegates from all the churches, or from such of them as chose to be represented, and the subjects on which they deliberated were those of great and general interest. But ecclesiastical bodies of this sort have long ceased to exist among us. Not one has been assembled in New England for more than a century.

##### 2. *Ministerial Associations.*

These bodies have come down to us from the days of the Pilgrims, and are still continued.

They are merely meetings of the ministers, within a given district, for mutual devotion, consultation, and improvement. The ministers of a particular Association adopt a constitution, choose the requisite officers, and meet from time to time, according to appointment. They do not directly represent the churches, and neither exercise nor claim any authority over them.

One of the most important duties of the Associations is that of *licensing candidates for the gospel ministry*. A young man wishing to enter the ministry presents himself before some regular Association for license. He is strictly examined as to his church standing, his piety, his motives in desiring the work of the ministry, his natural and acquired abilities, his course of education, and his qualifications generally for the important work to which he aspires. If the examination is satisfactory, he is recommended to the churches as a suitable person to be employed as a candidate for the gospel ministry. This recommendation is called a *license*, and is usually limited to the term of two or three years; at the end of which, should the person receiving it not be previously ordained, his license may be renewed.

The licentiate of an Association is regarded as, in some sense, under the care of the Association, until he shall be ordained, or till his license expire; and should his conduct be exceptionable, it is competent to the Association to take his license from him.

The tendency of this system of licenses, which has been in operation some hundred and fifty years, has been to prevent incompetent and unworthy men from intruding into the ministry, and in this way it has been of inestimable benefit to the churches.

### 3. *General Associations.*

The Associations of some of the New England States, are accustomed to meet, by their delegates, once a year, in what are called *General Associations*. These, like the bodies composing them, are mere meetings of ministers, to consult and pray together, and act on questions of general concernment. The tendency of these meetings has been to extend the acquaintance of ministers to increase their knowledge, piety, and zeal; to give them new interest in each other, and in the benevolent enterprises of the age; and to promote a kindly, brotherly affection. As these large bodies claim no authority or influence over the churches, other

than that of truth and love, we can see no good reason why they should not be encouraged.

#### 4. *Church Conferences.*

Church Conferences are of more modern date than either of the bodies last described. These are composed of ministers and delegates from the churches of a county, or some other local district, not called together, as in the case of councils, for a specific purpose, but meeting at stated seasons—commonly twice in the year. Each Conference adopts a constitution, chooses its officers, and conducts its meetings in its own way. The more prominent objects of these meetings are social prayer, the extension of Christian intercourse and acquaintance, and mutual instruction and edification. Much of the time is spent, usually, in religious exercises. The state of the church is reported at each meeting, and if any are in circumstances of difficulty or want, means are devised, if possible, for their relief.

The Church Conferences, like the Associations, claim no authority over the churches. These meetings, though of comparatively recent origin, have uniformly been occasions of interest and profit.

### 5. *General Conference.*

The Church Conference system, though it has been extended over different parts of New England, has no where been so thoroughly systematized as in Maine. The District Conferences in Maine, which embrace all the proper Congregationalism in the State, are accustomed to meet annually, by their delegates, in a *General Conference*. The objects of the General Conference are not materially different from those of the District Conferences, except that they are of a more extended interest. The state of *all* the churches is reported, plans of usefulness are considered, and more time than is usual in such meetings is devoted to religious exercises.

In connection with the meeting of the General Conference, the different charitable societies in the State are accustomed to hold their anniversaries. Every meeting, both of the General Conference and of the District Conferences, is closed with the administration of the Lord's Supper.

These meetings, which are numerous attended, have had the effect to unite the Congregational Churches of Maine, and to keep them

united. They are highly esteemed by ministers and Christians throughout the State, and their influence, it is believed, has been uniformly happy.

## SECTION XV.

### *Evangelists, or Missionaries.*

THE evangelists of the primitive church were not pastors, but *itinerant preachers*, who labored, for the most part, in connection with the Apostles, and under their direction. Such were Timothy and Titus. Such was "Philip, the evangelist;" and a great many others. They were (under the Apostles) the *missionaries* of the primitive age, by whom the gospel was extended into the dark places of the earth, and the way was prepared for the organization of churches, and the settlement of pastors. In this sense, the office of evangelist is one of great importance, and we have many such evangelists in connection with our churches. The most of our missionaries, in foreign lands and in our own country, belong to this class of ministers.

Timothy was ordained by the "laying on of the hands of the presbytery;" (1 Tim. 4: 14)

and missionaries now, no less than settled pastors, require ordination. They *must* be ordained; else they are not duly invested with the sacred office, and qualified to administer the sacraments of the church.

The usages of our churches in the ordination of missionaries have not been, in all respects, uniform. The first missionary ordination in New England, of which we have any account, took place in the year 1733, and seems to have been performed by some of the ministers of Boston. In several instances since, such ordinations have been effected by Ministerial Associations. But the more common practice, and the one to be pursued wherever practicable, is to convene an ordaining council. The matter is one in which the churches have a deep interest, and it is reasonable that their direct concurrence should, if possible, be secured. The council may be called by the church of which the missionary is a member, or by the executive officers of the Society by which he is to be sent forth. The examination before the council, and the exercises generally, will not differ materially on such an occasion, from what they are in the ordination of a pastor.

## SECTION XVI.

*Advantages of Congregationalism.*

1. ONE advantage of Congregationalism over every other form of church organization is its decidedly *scriptural* character. It is substantially in accordance with the organizations of the Apostles. And ours is the only form of church government of which this can be said. We have seen that Congregational churches are *separate bodies—voluntary associations*,—each possessing the right of self-subsistence, and self-government; the right, under Christ, to elect its own officers, to admit and exclude members, to maintain its own discipline, and to transact all its appropriate concerns, independent of foreign jurisdiction or control. Such are some of the more strongly marked *peculiarities* of Congregationalism. And on all these points, the system of our churches and that of the Apostles, are *identical*. Between the two there is a perfect agreement. It is unnecessary to dwell on this topic here. We regard it as the first and highest recommendation of Congregationalism, that it is substantially *scriptural*.

2. A further recommendation of it, more especially to American citizens, should be its *free*

*republican* character. It is adapted to a free people. Its influence is to *make*, and to *keep* them free. A Congregational church is a society of spiritual freemen. It acknowledges no head, no lawgiver but Christ, and no appropriate means of influence but those of truth, wisdom and love. All important matters are transacted openly, in church meeting, where every brother has an equal right to express his opinion and to give his vote.

It is to these free principles of *church* government, which our forefathers professed to draw from the Bible, that we are indebted for our *civil* freedom. With the first settlers of New England, *the church* was the primary institution, to which the State was but secondary and subsidiary. They first formed their system of *church* government, and then adapted their civil government to it. And what form of civil government would they be likely to select, in order to carry out their plan? Obviously none but a *free republic*. No other would have answered their purpose at all. To have established a monarchy, or an aristocracy, in connection with their Congregationalism, would have been incongruous and monstrous.

The republican character of our church gov-

ernment is, next to its scriptural character, perhaps, its highest recommendation. It is the form of government which our republican ancestors brought with them to these shores. It is that to which they adapted, and out of which *grew*, our civil, republican institutions.

3. Among the advantages of Congregationalism should be reckoned its salutary *personal* influence on those who embrace it. Every member of a Congregational church feels that he has a deep interest, and an individual responsibility, in regard to its concerns. He is not a mere appendage, to be cared for, looked after, and ruled over by "tutors and governors,"—but is himself an integral part of the body, and of the government, having it in charge, with others, to maintain its worship, its order, its discipline, and to promote its purity, enlargement and peace. He feels, in short, that he is a *man*—a *free Christian man*, entrusted with important interests, and that he must acquit himself accordingly. He must inform himself as to the truths and duties of religion; he must grow in knowledge and in grace; he must be watchful and prayerful, diligent in duty and circumspect in deportment; that he may honor the profession which he has made, and be an orna-

ment to the church of which he is a member. As much as a republican form of civil government demands intelligence, and tends to promote it, among citizens, so does a republican form of church government tend to the personal advancement—the knowledge, virtue and holiness of those who live under it. It throws upon them, individually, high responsibilities ; and awakens their energies, and stirs their zeal, to meet these responsibilities in a worthy and becoming manner.

4. Congregationalism has a happy influence, not only upon its members, but its *ministers*. The Congregational clergy are taken from the people, and are elected to the stations they occupy by the free suffrages of their brethren. And when in office, they are not lords over God's heritage, but its servants. They have not dominion over the faith of those around them, but are helpers of their joy. They have not those temptations to arrogance and pride which are furnished by some other forms of ecclesiastical organization, but have every inducement to be diligent and faithful, that they may be accepted of God and approved of men.

Such are the obvious *tendencies* of Congregationalism, in its influence upon ministers ; and

these tendencies have all been realized in the history of the church. During the first century after Christ, and the first half of the second century, the churches were all Congregational; and their ministers were an honor to the system. They were such as the system was adapted to produce. A more humble, patient, laborious, self-sacrificing class of men the world never saw. But when the government of the church was gradually changed, and the humble pastors of the first century became titled dignitaries—bishops, archbishops, metropolitans, patriarchs; a different spirit pervaded the entire ranks of the clergy. In time they became as distinguished for pride and carnal ambition, as their predecessors had been for humility and deadness to the world.

5. We mention but another advantage of Congregationalism, and that is its influence upon *the churches*. That it tends eminently to the purity and elevation of the churches, we cannot doubt. As much as this may be inferred from what was said above as to its influence upon the individual members. For whatever tends to elevate the individual, must tend to the benefit of the churches, which are composed of individuals.

But we may look at the subject in another light. We hold that a church is less likely to be corrupted, when its government is in the hands of an intelligent *brotherhood*, who are all interested to preserve it pure, than when vested alone in its officers, its clergy; and if corruptions have already intruded, they may be more easily and effectually purged away. The *discipline* of a church is more powerful—its *censures* have greater weight, when administered by the body, and when carrying with them, as to some extent they necessarily must, the force of public sentiment, than when originating with a mere officer, or corps of officers, and published on their responsibility alone.

It may be thought an objection to this view of the case, that a portion of the Congregational churches of New England have fallen into Unitarianism, while those sects which are under a more stringent form of government have in great measure escaped. But there are several things to be considered in regard to this matter, which will abate very much the force of the objection. Be it remembered, then, that the first church in New England which became avowedly Unitarian, was not Congregational, but Episcopal.\*

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\* King's Chapel, Boston.

It should be remembered too, that Unitarianism came into our Congregational churches in a way not to be excluded by any form of government whatever. It came in, not openly and above board, but *crept* in, gradually, secretly, undiscovered, undisclosed, and ere the churches were aware, the evil was upon them. It had firmly entrenched itself in the midst of them. It should be further remembered, that as soon as the error was fairly disclosed, and even before, the sound portion of our churches, (which includes the great body of them) were taking measures to effect a separation,—which measures have been entirely successful; so that the proper Congregational churches of New England, so far as doctrine and discipline are concerned, were never in a more satisfactory state than they are at present. It should be further remarked, that while, in America, a portion of the Congregational churches have fallen into Unitarianism, and the Presbyterian churches have escaped; in Geneva and England just the reverse of this is true. The old Presbyterian churches there, almost without an exception, have fallen into Unitarianism, and the Congregational churches have escaped. When all these considerations are duly weighed, we trust that the objection above stated will not be thought to have much remaining force.

It has been urged by some, that the Congregational form of church government must be *loose* and *defective*; that it has not enough of *energy*, to render the churches strong and efficient. But if such was the form of government adopted by the Apostles, acting under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, it will hardly be believed that this objection can have much force. The objection, too, is obviated by the lessons of experience. Were not the primitive churches efficient? Did not they accomplish as much for God and the souls of men, as any churches, in an equal period, have ever done since?

And where, since the first two centuries of the Christian era, shall we look for churches more efficient and flourishing, than the Congregational and Baptist churches of England and America? \* To be sure, there have sometimes been difficulties in these churches, as there have been in all others. There have been occasional violations of order, and breaches of fellowship. But these have resulted, commonly, more from misapprehension, or a want of brotherly love, than from any inherent defect of ecclesiastical organization. Of course, a remedy for them is

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\* In their form of government, the Baptist churches are Congregational.

to be sought in a better understanding of our peculiar principles, and an increase of the spirit of love, and not in a departure from that form of church government, which we believe to have been sanctioned by Christ and his Apostles. It should be considered, too, that difficulties in our churches can be settled, without agitating a whole continent, and lying over, by appeal from one ecclesiastical court to another, for a course of years. The disturbance is limited to a narrow circle and is removed or healed, ordinarily, in a little time.

On the whole, we think that the Congregationalists of New England have much reason to be satisfied with that form of church government which was bequeathed to them by their fathers; which, as we have seen, is so consonant to scripture, and so congenial with the spirit of their civil institutions. Indeed, they have reason to be more than satisfied. It becomes them to be *thankful* for it, and to *rejoice* in it. And while they accept it with all thankfulness and joy, they should endeavor to show themselves worthy of their peculiar privileges. They should endeavor to honor their institutions, by works of faith and labors of love; by examples of intelligent and steadfast obedience.



## A P P E N D I X .

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### FORMS.

It belongs not to Congregationalists to *prescribe* forms; nor is it at all essential to the well being of our churches, that there be a strict identity of forms. Still, it may be convenient that a Manual of Congregationalism, designed to be submitted to the churches, should contain some of the more *necessary forms*, to be adopted wholly, partially, or not at all, as individuals and churches shall think best.

#### No. I.

##### CONFESSION OF FAITH.

The following is a form of Creed or Confession, in use in a portion of our churches. The several articles of the creed are followed by appropriate proof-texts, and some of them by brief explanations.

##### ARTICLE I.

We believe that there is but one God, the sole Creator, Preserver, and moral Governor of the Universe; a Being of infinite wisdom, power, justice, goodness and truth; the self-existent, independent, and unchanging fountain of good.

## PROOF.

“The Lord our God is *one Lord*.” Deut. 6 : 4. “He that *built all things* is God.” Heb. 3 : 4.

“*Upholding all things* by the word of his power.” Heb. 1 : 3.

“He is a *great King* over all the earth.” Ps. 47 : 2.

“His understanding is *infinite*.” Ps. 147 : 5.

“I am the *Almighty* God.” Gen. 17 : 1.

“Thou renderest to every man according to his work.” Ps. 62 : 12.

“There is none *good* but one, that is God.” Mat. 19 : 17.

“The *eternal* God is thy refuge.” Deut. 33 : 27.

“With whom is *no variableness*, neither *shadow of turning*.” James 1 : 17.

## ARTICLE II.

We believe that the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God ; that they contain a complete and harmonious system of Divine truth ; and are our only and perfect rule of doctrinal belief and religious practice.

## PROOF.

“*All scripture* is given by inspiration of God.” 2 Tim. 3 : 16.

“The prophecy came not, in old time, by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were *moved by the Holy Ghost*.” 2 Pet. 1 : 21.

“Which things we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which *the Holy Ghost teacheth*.” 1 Cor. 2 : 13.

“The gospel which was preached of me is not after man ; for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but *by the revelation of Jesus Christ*.” Gal. 1 : 11, 12.

“Hold fast *the form of sound words*, which thou hast heard of me.” 2 Tim. 1 : 13.

## ARTICLE III.

We believe that, according to the scriptures, the mode of the Divine existence is such as lays a foundation for a threefold distinction of persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and that these three are in essence one, and in all Divine attributes equal.

## EXPLANATION.

Trinitarians do not regard the three persons in the Godhead as *separate, independent beings*; for this would be *tritheism*. Nor do they regard them as mere *official distinctions*; for this would be one form of *Unitarianism*. Nor do they regard *each* of the three persons as God; in the sense in which they *all* constitute one God; for this would be a *contradiction, an absurdity*. But they believe that in the one undivided essence of the Godhead, there exists a three-fold distinction of persons; and that while each of these persons is, in *some sense* God, and *equally* God, in *some other sense*, they all constitute but one God. This statement involves no absurdity. For aught that any human being can show to the contrary, it *may be true*; and Trinitarians believe that it *is true*. They believe that God has so revealed the mode of his own existence.

## PROOF.

*Christ is God.*

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and *the Word was God.*” John 1: 1.

“Who is over all, *God blessed forever.*” Rom. 9: 5.

“*God* was manifest in the flesh.” 1 Tim. 3: 16.

“This is the *true God*, and eternal life.” 1 John 5: 20.

“His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the *Mighty God.*” Is. 9: 6.

“This is the name wherewith he shall be called, *Jehovah our righteousness.*” Jer. 23: 6.

“By him (Christ) were *all things created*, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; *all things were created by him, and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.*” Col. 1: 16, 17.

“Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, *O God*, is forever and ever.” “Let all the angels of God *worship him.*” Heb. 1: 6, 8.

“I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.” Rev. 5: 11, 12.

#### *The Holy Spirit is God.*

“Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the *Holy Ghost*? Thou hast not lied unto men, but *unto God.*” Acts 5: 3, 4.

“Except a man be born of water and *the Spirit*, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of *God.*” John 3: 5. 1: 13.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of *God.*” “Holy men of God spake as they were moved by *the Holy Ghost.*” 2 Tim 3: 16. 2 Pet. 1: 21.

“Who through *the eternal Spirit*, offered himself without spot to God.” Heb. 9: 14.

“The Spirit searcheth *all things*, even *the deep things of God.*” 1 Cor. 2: 10.

#### *The Trinity.*

“Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of *the Father*, and of *the Son*, and of *the Holy Ghost.*” Mat. 28: 19.

“The grace of *the Lord Jesus*, the love of *God*, and the communion of the *Holy Ghost*, be with you.” 2 Cor. 13: 14.

“Through *him* (Christ) we both have access by *one Spirit*, unto *the Father.*” Eph. 2: 18.

“Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God *the Father*, through sanctification of *the Spirit* unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of *Jesus Christ*.” 1 Pet. 1 : 2.

“One *Spirit*, one *Lord* (Christ), one *God and Father* of all.” Eph. 4 : 4.

“How much more shall the blood of *Christ*, who through the eternal *Spirit* offered himself without spot to *God* (the Father), purge your conscience from dead works.” Heb. 9 : 14.

#### ARTICLE IV.

We believe that the one Supreme God has made all things for himself; that known unto him were all his works from the beginning; and that he governs all things according to the holy and unchanging counsel of his own will; yet in such a manner as that man is a free agent, and accountable for all his actions.

#### PROOF.

“The Lord hath made all things *for himself*.” Prov. 16 : 4.

“For *thy pleasure* they are and were created.” Rev. 4 : 11.

“Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world.” Acts 15 : 18.

“My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.” Is. 46 : 10.

“He doth according to his will, in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?” Dan. 4 : 35.

“Who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” Eph. 1 : 11.

“Choose you this day whom you will serve.” Josh. 24 : 15.

“Therefore, choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.” Deut. 30 : 19.

“ How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and *ye would not.*” Mat. 23 : 37.

#### ARTICLE V.

We believe that the Divine law, and the principles of the Divine government, are perfectly holy, just, and good.

##### PROOF.

“ The law of the Lord is *perfect.*” Ps. 19 : 7.

“ The law is *holy*, and the commandment *holy, just, and good.*” Rom. 7 : 12.

“ As for God, his way is *perfect.*” Ps. 18 : 30.

“ *Justice and judgment* are the habitation of his throne.” Ps. 89 : 14.

#### ARTICLE VI.

We believe that the first parents of the human race were originally holy, created in the image of God ; and that they fell from their original state, by voluntarily transgressing the Divine command, in the article of forbidden fruit.

##### PROOF.

“ God created man in his *own image* ; in the image of God created he him.” Gen. 1 : 27.

“ God hath made man *upright.*” Ecc. 7 : 29.

“ Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, *thou shalt not eat of it* ; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” “ And she (the woman) took of the fruit thereof, and *did eat* ; and gave also to her husband with her, and *he did eat.*” Gen. 2 : 17, 3 : 6.

“ By *one man*, sin entered into the world, and death by sin.” “ By the *offence of one*, judgment came upon all men to condemnation.” Rom. 5 : 12, 17.

## ARTICLE VII.

We believe that, in consequence of the apostacy, the heart of man, in his natural state, is enmity against God, fully set to do evil, and dead in trespasses and sins.

## EXPLANATION.

By the entire sinfulness of the natural man, we do not mean that he is, in all cases, as bad as he can be; or that he is *incapacitated* for doing right; or that he has no amiable natural and social affections; or that he never acts sincerely, and in some sense conscientiously. But we do mean that he is without holiness; that his moral affections are all evil; and that he is entirely under the dominion of sin.

## PROOF.

“The imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” “Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually.” Gen. 6: 5. 8: 21.

“The heart of the sons of men is *fully set in them* to do evil.” Ecc. 8: 11.

“I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth *no good thing.*” Rom. 7: 8.

“The carnal mind is *enmity against God*; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” Rom. 8: 7.

“You hath he quickened, who *were dead* in trespasses and sins,” “and were by nature the *children of wrath*, even as others.” Eph. 2: 1, 3.

“Except a man be *born again*, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” John 3: 3.

## ARTICLE VIII.

We believe that Christ, the Son of God, has, by his sufferings and blood, made a sufficient atonement for the sins of all men; that he is the only Re-

deemer of sinners; and that all who are saved are indebted altogether to the sovereign grace of God through his atonement.

## PROOF.

“He was wounded for *our transgressions*; he was bruised for *our iniquities*; the chastisement of *our* peace was upon him, and with *his stripes we* are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, and the Lord hath laid on *him* the iniquity of us all” Is. 53: 5, 6.

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” John 1: 29.

“He appeared, to put away sin *by the sacrifice of himself.*” Heb. 9: 26.

“The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” 1 John 1: 7.

“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” 1 Pet. 2: 24.

“Whom God hath sent forth to be a *propitiation*, through faith in his blood, to *declare his righteousness* . . . . . that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” Rom. 3: 25, 26.

“He is the *propitiation for our sins*, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” 1 John 2: 2.

“Unto him that loved us, and *washed us from our sins in his own blood*, . . . . . to him be glory and dominion forever and ever.” Rev. 1: 5, 6.

## ARTICLE IX.

We believe that, although the invitations of the gospel are such, that whosoever will may come and take of the waters of life freely; yet the depravity of the human heart is such, that no man will come to Christ, except the Father, by the special and efficacious influences of his Spirit, draw him.

## PROOF.

“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters ; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price ” Is. 55 : 1.

“If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.” John 7 : 37.

“Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.” John 6 : 37.

“The Spirit and the bride say, Come ; and let him that heareth say, Come ; and let him that is athirst come ; and whosoever will let him come, and take the waters of life freely.” Rev. 22 : 17.

“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” John 6 : 44.

“It is *God* that worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure ” Phil. 2 : 13.

“Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of *God*.”

## ARTICLE X.

We believe that those who embrace the gospel were chosen, in Christ, before the world began ; and that they were saved, not by works of righteousness which they have done, but according to the distinguishing mercy of God, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

## EXPLANATION.

The eternal election of believers was not, as some say, an *arbitrary* election, but one founded on the *best reasons*, though these may be unknown to us. It had respect to the *good character* of the elect, not indeed as the *ground* of their election, but as the *result* of it, or rather as *included in it*. Hence, election never saved a bad man, or destroyed a good one ; and never can. Nor is election inconsistent with the *free agency* of man, or with the *free and universal offers* of the

*gospel*, but rather implies both. Both the elect and non-elect *must* be free agents, and *must* freely accept, or reject, the offers of the gospel: for as much as this is involved in the eternal counsels of God respecting them. Nor is election inconsistent with those scriptures which represent God as disposed to treat his creatures *according to their works*. He will treat them after this manner in the last great day, and thus glorify his justice, as well as his grace; and in so doing he will, not defeat, but *accomplish* that great plan or purpose which was formed respecting them before the world began.

## PROOF.

“He hath *chosen us* in him (Christ) before the foundation of the world, that *we should be holy* and without blame before him in love; having *predestinated us* unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will.” “Being *predestinated*, according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” Eph. 1: 4, 5, 11.

“Whom he did foreknow, he also *did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son*; moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Rom. 8: 29, 30.

“As many as were *ordained to eternal life, believed.*” Acts 13: 48.

“All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me.” John 6: 37.

“Who hath saved us, and called as with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began.” 2 Tim. 1: 9.

“That the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, it was said: The elder shall serve the younger.” Rom. 9: 11.

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” Tit. 3: 5.

## ARTICLE XI.

We believe that for those who exercise faith in Christ, there is no condemnation, and that they will be kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation.

## EXPLANATION.

The final perseverance of believers does not imply that they have received that in regeneration which it is *naturally impossible* for them to lose; or that their holy purposes are so strong that they *cannot* be broken; or that in themselves they are in no danger of falling away; or that they are kept, independently of their own exertions, so that they have no need of encouragements, warnings, and *motives* to sustain them; or that they are so kept, that they never backslide from duty, and fall into sin. But the doctrine does imply, that from all their falls they shall rise; and that, in accordance with the most gracious purpose and promises of God, and by the power of his Spirit working in them to will and to do, while they work out their own salvation with fear and trembling—they shall hold on their way, endure to the end, and finally be received to the heavenly mansions.

## PROOF.

“There is, therefore, now *no condemnation* to them which are in Christ Jesus.” Rom. 8 : 1.

“He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, *hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.*” John 5 : 24.

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and *I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.* My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and *none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand*” John 10 : 27 — 29.

“The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” Prov. 4: 18.

“The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, *springing up into everlasting life.*” John 4: 14.

“He which hath begun a good work in you *will perform it*, until the day of Jesus Christ.” Phil. 1: 6.

“Who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation.” 1 Peter 1: 5.

“I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, *shall be able to separate us from the love of God*, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Rom. 8: 38, 39.

“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, *they would no doubt have continued with us*; but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.” 1 John 2: 19.

## ARTICLE XII.

We believe that there will be a resurrection of the just and unjust; that all mankind must one day stand before the judgment seat of Christ, to receive sentence of just and final retribution, according to their respective works; and that from the judgment seat, the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.

### PROOF.

#### *Resurrection.*

“The hour is coming, in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.” John 5: 28, 29.

“*There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.*” Acts 24: 51.

“*Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive*” 1 Cor. 15: 21, 22.

“*It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.*” 1 Cor. 15: 42.

“*Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.*” Phil. 3: 20.

#### *General Judgment.*

“*He hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness.*” Acts 17: 31.

“*We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.*” 2 Cor. 5: 10. Rom. 14: 10.

“*When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations,*” &c. Mat. 25: 31, 46.

“*I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God. And the books were opened; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books.*” Rev. 20: 12.

#### *Eternal Retribution.*

“*Then shall the King say to them on his right hand; Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*” “*Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand; Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*” “*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.*” Mat. 25: 34, 41, 46.

“*Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power.*” 2 Thess. 1: 9.

“*The smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever.*” Rev. 14: 11. 20: 10.

## ARTICLE XIII.

We believe that Christ has a visible church in the world, into which none, in the sight of God, but real believers, and none, in the sight of men, but visible believers, have right of admission.

## PROOF.

“Upon this rock will I build *my church*, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Mat. 16: 18.

“He (Christ) is the *head of the body, the church.*”  
“For *his body's sake, which is the church.*” Col. 1: 18, 24.

“We are members of *his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.*” Eph. 5: 30.

“The Lord added to the church daily, *such as shou'd be saved.*” Acts. 2: 47.

“Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them which are *sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints.*” 1 Cor. 1: 2.

“Unto the church of the Thessalonians, which is *in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ.*” 1 Thess. 1: 1.

“To all the *saints in Christ Jesus, which are at Phillippi, with the bishops and deacons.*” Phil. 1: 1.  
See also Eph. 1: 1, and Col. 1: 1.

## ARTICLE XIV.

We believe that the sacraments of the New Testament are baptism and the Lord's supper; that believers of regular church standing only, can consistently partake of the holy supper; and that visible believers, with their households only, can consistently be admitted to the ordinance of baptism.”

## PROOF.

*Baptism of Adults.*

“They that *gladly received the word* were baptized.”  
Acts 2: 41.

“What doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said; *If thou believest with all thine heart*, thou mayest.” Acts 8: 37.

“When they *believed Philip*, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” Acts 8: 12.

*Household Baptism.*

“God said unto Abraham: This is my covenant which ye shall keep, between me and you, and thy seed after thee; *every man child among you shall be circumcised.*” “He that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations.” “And my covenant shall be in your flesh for an *everlasting covenant.*”

“I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, for an *everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.*” Gen. 17: 7, 10, 12.

“And this I say, that the covenant, which was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law (of Moses) which was four hundred and thirty years after, *cannot disannul*, that it should make the promise of none effect.” Gal. 3: 17.

“He (Abraham) received the sign of circumcision, *a seal of the righteousness of the faith* which he had being yet uncircumcised, *that he might be the father of all them that believe.*” Rom. 4: 11.

“That *the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles*, through Jesus Christ.” Gal. 3: 14.

“And he (the jailor) took them, the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and *all his* straightway.” Acts 16: 33.

And she (Lydia) was baptized, and *her household.*” Acts 16: 15.

“I baptized also *the household* of Stephanas.” 1 Cor. 1: 16.

“Go ye, therefore, and teach *all nations*, baptizing them,” &c. Mat 28: 19.

*The Lord's Supper.*

“The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you. *This do in remembrance of me.* After the same manner, also, he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood. *This do ye, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.* For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death, *till he come.* Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord *unworthily*, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man *examine himself*, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh *unworthily*, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.” 1 Cor. 11: 23, 29.

No. II.

FORM OF CHURCH COVENANT.

You do now, in the presence of God, angels, and men, avouch the Lord Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to be your God; the supreme object of your soul, and your chosen portion forever. You cordially acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ, in all his mediatorial offices, Prophet, Priest, and King, as your only Savior and final Judge, and choose the Holy Ghost as your Sanctifier, Comforter, and Guide. You humbly and cheerfully devote your whole self, soul and body, to God, in the everlasting covenant of grace, consecrate all your powers and faculties to his service and glory; and promise, through the help of Divine grace, without which you can do

nothing, that you will give diligent heed to his word and ordinances; that you will maintain the worship of God in your family; that you will seek in all things the honor of his name and the interests of his kingdom; and that henceforth, denying all ungodliness and every worldly lust, you will live soberly, righteously and godly, even until death. And you cordially join yourself to this as a true church of Christ; unreservedly engaging to submit to its discipline, so far as conformable to the rules of the gospel, and solemnly covenanting to strive, as much as in you lies, for its peace, edification and purity, and to walk with its members in Christian love, faithfulness, circumspection, meekness, and sobriety. Thus you *covenant, promise, and engage.*

The candidate for admission having signified his assent to the Covenant on his part, the Church rise and address him, by its Pastor or presiding officer, in the following language:

And now do we, the members of this church, receive you cheerfully to our communion; engaging on our part to love you, pray for you, and watch over you as Christians, and entreating you to remember that, from this solemn hour, you have assumed obligations from which you can never escape. Wherever you go, these vows will be upon you. They will follow you to the bar of God, and in whatever world you may be fixed, will abide upon you to eternity. You can never again be as you have been. You have unalterably committed yourself, and henceforth you must be the servant of God. Hereafter the eyes of the world will be upon you; and as you demean yourself, so religion will be honored or disgraced. If you walk worthy of your profession, you will be a credit and comfort to us; but if otherwise, it will be an occasion of grief and reproach.

But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things which accompany salvation, though we thus speak. May the Lord guide and preserve you till death, and at last receive you and us to that blessed world where our love and joy shall be forever perfect. AMEN.

## No. III.

LETTER MISSIVE FROM PERSONS WISHING TO BE ORGANIZED INTO A CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

———, ———, 18

*To the Congregational Church of Christ, in ———,*  
Reverend and Beloved,

Whereas the Great Head of the Church has disposed a number of persons in the town of ———, to unite together, for public worship and the celebration of religious ordinances, under a Congregational form of church government, the undersigned, in behalf of their brethren, respectfully solicit your attendance, by your Rev. pastor and delegate, at the house of ———, on the ——— of ———, at ——— o'clock, to take into consideration the propriety of organizing us into a Congregational Church of Christ; and should such a step be deemed expedient, to assist in the appropriate services of such an occasion.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, we subscribe ourselves,

Yours in the gospel,

———, } Committee  
 ———, } of  
 ———, } Arrangements.

## . No. IV.

## CALL FROM THE CHURCH TO A PASTOR ELECT.

To Mr.\* — [or, the Rev. Mr. —,]

The undersigned, a committee of the Congregational Church of Christ, in —, would respectfully submit to your consideration the following votes of the Church:

At a regular meeting of the Congregational church in —, on the — day of —,

*Voted*, That the members of this church are entirely satisfied with the piety, orthodoxy, and ministerial qualifications of Mr. — [or Rev. Mr. —, as the case may be.]

[The state of the votes should be given, whether unanimous, or by what majority.]

*Voted*, That Mr. — be invited to become the pastor and teacher of this church.

*Voted*, That brethren A, B and C, be a committee to communicate these votes to Mr. —, and to make other arrangements which may be necessary to carry out the wishes of the church in relation to the premises.†

——, *Moderator.*

——, *Clerk.*

The committee are happy to say, that an entire unanimity of feeling [or as the case may be] prevails in the parish, in reference to your settlement among us. The doings of the society will accompany this communication.

\*If the pastor-elect has not been ordained, it is proper to address him as *Mr.* and not *Rev.*

† The other things referred to here, are the calling of a parish or society meeting, for the purpose of concurring with the church, and fixing the salary, etc.

It would be equally proper to have the church vote "a call" to the candidate, embodying the substance of the votes, and the statements of the committee.

And now, dear sir, permit us personally, and in behalf of the church which we represent, to express our earnest desire that you will accept of our invitation to the pastoral office among us, and name an early day for the ordination services.

Praying that God would guide you to a favorable decision, we subscribe ourselves, in behalf of the church,  
Your brethren in Christ,

\_\_\_\_\_, }  
\_\_\_\_\_, } *Committee of*  
\_\_\_\_\_, } *the Church.*

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, 18—.

### No. V.

#### LETTER MISSIVE FOR AN ORDAINING COUNCIL.

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, 18—,

*The Church of Christ in \_\_\_\_\_, to the Church of Christ in \_\_\_\_\_, sendeth Greeting.*

Whereas the Great Head of the Church hath kindly united the hearts of this church, and the congregation statedly worshipping with us, in the choice of Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ [or Rev. as the case may be] for our pastor and teacher, and he has accepted our invitation to settle with us in the gospel ministry, and suitable provision has been made for his temporal support, we affectionately solicit your attendance by pastor and delegate, at the house of Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, on \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ next, at \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock in the \_\_\_\_\_ to assist in the examination of the candidate; and, if judged proper, in the ordination services.

May grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied unto you all.  
Your brethren in Christ,

\_\_\_\_\_, }  
\_\_\_\_\_, } *Committee*  
\_\_\_\_\_, } *of the*  
          } *Church.*

The other churches invited to sit in council, are  
 —— [here name them.]

Rev. Mr. —— and delegate will please call upon  
 Mr. —— for entertainment.

## No. VI.

## LETTER OF INTRODUCTION.

*To whom it may concern.*

This may certify, that the bearer. Mr. —— ——  
 is a member, in regular standing, of the Congrega-  
 tional church in ——. Expecting to be absent from  
 us for some months, and desiring Christian inter-  
 course during his absence, he has requested a letter  
 of introduction to any church of Christ with which  
 he may wish to commune; he is therefore, hereby  
 affectionately recommended to the occasional com-  
 munion and fellowship of all who love our Lord Je-  
 sus Christ.

———, *Pastor of the Cong. Chh.*

[*or, Clerk, as the case may be.*]

——, ——, 18——.

[This sort of letter does not require a vote of the  
 church. The pastor, or if the church has no pastor,  
 the moderator, or stated clerk, may give the intro-  
 ductory letter. No member should leave the place  
 of his residence for any considerable number of  
 weeks, without taking such a letter.]

## No. VII.

## LETTER OF DISMISSION AND RECOMMENDATION.

*The Congregational Church in ——, to the Congre-  
 gational Church in ——.*

Reverend and Beloved,

The bearer, —— ——, a member of this church,

in regular standing, having requested a letter of dismission and recommendation to you, the church have voted the same. When received by you, his particular relation to us will be considered at an end.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace,

We are yours in the Lord, in behalf of the church,

———, *Pastor.*

———, *Church Clerk.*

———, —, 18—.

## No. VIII.

### LETTER MISSIVE FOR A DISMISSING COUNCIL.

*The Congregational Church in —, to the Congregational Church in —, sendeth Greeting.*

Whereas difficulties have arisen among us, which seem to render the dissolution of the pastoral relation between the Rev. Mr. — and this church desirable, [or, this church having become impoverished by deaths and removals, so as to be unable any longer to sustain the ministry among us; or, whatever the case may be] we respectfully request the advice of your Rev. pastor and a delegate, in relation to the question—Whether, under existing circumstances, this connection ought not be sundered?

[Time and place of the meeting.]

In the bonds of the Gospel, we are yours,

———, *Pastor.*

———, *Clerk, or Comm. of the Chh.*

[Date.]

P. S. [Place of entertainment; other churches invited.]

## No. IX.

LETTER MISSIVE FROM A CHURCH AND AN AGGRIEVED BROTHER, OR BRETHREN, FOR A MUTUAL COUNCIL.

*The Congregational Church in ———, to the Congregational Church in ———.*

Rev. and Beloved,

This church have recently felt it their painful duty to exclude from their Christian fellowship Mr. ———, for [heretical sentiments, disorderly walk, or unchristian conduct, or all, or either, as the case may be]; and though a majority [or a large majority] are persuaded of the propriety and scriptural correctness of the course pursued, yet, as our late brother feels himself greatly aggrieved and injured by our act, and some few of our brethren are not altogether satisfied—we have thought proper to yield to his and their earnest request, that the advice of a mutual council might be taken. To the end, then, that all things may be done to the edification of the body of Christ, we respectfully invite you by your Rev. pastor and delegate, to meet in council, on ———, at ——— o'clock, at the house of ———, to review the doings of this church, and to give us such advice as your Christian wisdom may suggest.

May the blessing of the great Head of the Church be with you all.

Yours, in the Gospel,

————, *Pastor.*

————, *Clerk, or Committee.*

The subscriber [or subscribers] unites in the above request. ———, *The Aggrieved.*

———, ———, 18—.

P. S. The other churches invited are ———.

Rev. Mr. ——— and delegate will find accommodations at the house of Mr. ———.

## No. X.

LETTER MISSIVE FROM AN EXCOMMUNICATED INDIVIDUAL, ASKING FOR AN EX PARTE COUNCIL.

*To the Congregational Church in ———.*

The undersigned, feeling himself most unjustly dealt with, by the recent action of the Congregational Church in ———, and having solemnly protested against their proceedings, and earnestly solicited them to unite with him in asking advice of a mutual council, but without success, begs leave to lay before your Rev. body the following brief outline of the charges made against him, and of the proceedings of the church in reference to them. [Here may follow the charges, an account of the doings of the church, and a distinct annunciation of the several particulars in respect to which the church are believed to have erred.] In view of the whole case—which I have endeavored fairly to state—may I not confidently ask the aid of your Rev. pastor and a delegate, to sit in council with others, and investigate the case submitted, and advise in the premises?

With sentiments of Christian regard,

I am yours in affliction, ———.

P. S. The other churches sent to, are ———. The council are desired to meet at my house [or —] on ———, at ——— o'clock.

[Date.]

## No. XI.

LETTER MISSIVE FOR A MUTUAL COUNCIL.

*The Congregational Church in ———, to the Congregational Church in ———.*

Rev. and Beloved,

Difficulties having arisen between the pastor and sundry members of this church, in the adjustment of which we feel our need of your counsel, this is to invite your attendance, by pastor and delegate, at a

mutual council to be held at the house of ———, on ——— day of ———, at ——— o'clock, to advise us respecting the following matters, viz: [Here let every material point in the case be mentioned distinctly; as the church send their pastor and delegate to act upon these points, and none others,—the letter missive being the warrant on which the assembled council proceed]; and such other incidental matters as may grow out of these main points of difficulty between us.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace,  
We subscribe ourselves, yours,

————, *Pastor.*

————, *Comm. of the Chh.*

————, ———, 18—.

P. S. The Rev. Mr. ——— and delegate will be accommodated at the house of Mr. ———.

## No. XII.

### LETTER MISSIVE FOR AN EX PARTE COUNCIL.

[The same form may be used as for a mutual council, with this exception: It must be distinctly stated, that a *mutual* council has been proposed by the inviting party, and been rejected by the other party. *No church should send their pastor and delegate, to assist in an ex parte council, unless assured that a MUTUAL, has been first proposed and refused.*

The letter will be signed, of course, only by the sending party,—the pastor of the church, or the aggrieved brother or brethren, as the case may be.

The names of the invited churches should always be given; that every church may know with whom it is expected to associate in council.]

## No. XIII.

### MINUTES OF AN ECCLESIASTICAL COUNCIL.

[It is important that these be accurately and intelligibly made; as they should be placed among the

records of the church which calls the council, and should also be preserved by the scribe of the council for future reference. Something like the following form may be adopted:]

Minutes of an Ecclesiastical Council held at A——, ——, 18——, for the purpose of —— [here state the object]. Pursuant to letters missive from the Congregational church in A——, the pastors and delegates of the following churches assembled at the house of —— :

From the Congregational Church in B——, Rev. —— ——, Pastor, Brother —— ——, Delegate.

[Giving each church in alphabetical order.]

The brethren were called to order by Rev. —— ——, who read the letter missive.

The council was then organized, by choosing Rev. —— ——, moderator, and Rev. —— ——, scribe.

After prayer by the moderator, the council proceeded to business.

[Here should follow a brief statement of the proceedings; with notices of adjournments—devotional services, etc. If the council are called to assist in adjusting difficulties in the church, these should be succinctly, but clearly stated; and the decision of the council upon each successive point given. In a word—the scribe should endeavor to give a distinct outline of the case submitted to the council, and their treatment of the same. This document, after being carefully read, and corrected by the council, should, if necessary, be re-written, and then subscribed by the moderator and scribe, in the name of the council.]

#### RESULT OF COUNCIL.

[Sometimes it is deemed expedient to appoint a committee, to embody, in what is called a *Result of Council*, the case submitted, and the action of the council upon the same; and if so, the entries of the scribe may be of a more general nature. Sometimes the labor of making out a Result is assigned

to the scribe; and an *assistant* is appointed to perform the ordinary work of keeping minutes, etc.]

## No. XIV.

*The Congregational Church in ———, to the Council who may assemble to organize ——— Congregational Church in ———.*

Rev. and Beloved,

This may certify you, that the bearer, — — —, [where there are several persons going from the same church, their names may all be put into one letter] has, for some time, been a member, in good standing, of the Congregational church in ———. Proposing to unite in forming a new church, to be called — — —, he has asked a letter of dismission and recommendation for this purpose. We therefore heartily commend him to your Christian confidence, as a brother beloved in the Lord; and if received and recognized by you as a member of the church — — — his particular connection with us will be considered at an end.

Craving God's blessing on your proceedings, we subscribe ourselves yours, in the fellowship of the Gospel, in behalf of the church,

— —, 18—.

———— *Pastor.*

———— *Clerk.*

## No. XV.

## MANUAL FOR CHURCH MEETINGS.

“Those rules which have been found convenient in Legislative assemblies are equally applicable to all bodies convened for deliberation; the object being always the same; viz., the preservation of order, the security of the right of each member to speak his sentiments freely in debate, and the ascertainment of the opinion of the majority by their votes. In Congregational churches the pastor is generally regarded as the standing moderator of the church.

In case a church is destitute of a pastor, a standing moderator may be chosen, or one may be selected at each succeeding meeting. No brother should be allowed to hold the chair, who makes use of it to control the deliberations of the church, contrary to the common rules of order, or who claims the power to adjourn the meeting at his pleasure, to refuse to put to vote such questions as are disagreeable to himself, or in any way to embarrass the church in its deliberations or its decisions. The presiding brother, whoever he may be, derives all his power from the body over which he presides; and all his decisions are subject to its revision. When the church is assembled, without a pastor, some member should rise and nominate a moderator and put the question upon his election. But before the question is put, any member may propose a different candidate, and he will be chosen who receives the majority of votes.

“A clerk must next be chosen, unless the stated clerk be present. If the meeting be adjourned to another day, the same officers preside again, for an adjournment is but the continuance of the *same meeting*.”

“Every motion must be made in writing, *if required* by any member; and when seconded, must be read by the moderator and submitted to the consideration of the church. Until this motion is disposed of, all subsequent propositions must be made by way of amendment to it. An amendment may go to the exclusion, addition, or substitution of words or sentences; indeed, a motion to amend by striking out all the words after the word *resolved*, and substituting an entirely new proposition upon the same subject, is in order. Until some vote has been taken on a resolution or an amendment to it, it may be withdrawn by the mover. There are certain motions which are termed “*privileged*,” which may be made *at any time*; such is the mo-

tion to postpone indefinitely, to commit to a committee, to lay on the table, (which means to lay aside for the present,) to postpone to a future time fixed, and to adjourn. All these motions may be debated except the last. The motion to adjourn is always in order except when a member is speaking, and then no motion can be made but with the consent of the member who has the floor.

“When any motion is before the church every member has a right to express his views concerning it; and while doing so, the moderator is bound to confine him in his remarks to the point under consideration, and also to protect him against all interruption, except to call him to order if he violates the rules of courtesy, or the rules of debate: but after the matter of order is adjusted he has a right to go on to the end of his remarks.

“The proposition *last made* is always the proposition under consideration, and the first to be voted on; so that, when several amendments or propositions are before the meeting, the order in which they are voted upon is usually the *reverse* of the order in which they were made. If several sums are proposed, the *largest* is to be put first to vote; if several *times*, the *longest*, and as to numbers generally, the largest.

“When a motion is put to vote, it should be first clearly stated from the chair, so that there may be no possible misunderstanding about it. Then the moderator says: As many as are in favor of this resolution, will please to say, aye—or lift up their hands, or rise, as the custom of the church may be; then,

“As many as are against this resolution—or as are of a different opinion—will please to say no; or—lift up their hands—or rise. Then the moderator declares the result by saying—It is a vote, or it is *not* a vote,—as it seems to him.

“If any member thinks the moderator in error, or

that an accurate count would change the result, he has a right to demand it immediately; when the question must be put again, and the votes carefully counted. After the question is put to vote, there can be no debate, and no new proposition made, until the voting is finished. After the vote is taken, any member who voted in the *majority*, may, during the same meeting, move a reconsideration; which motion opens the subject again for debate: and, if the vote to reconsider is adopted, the whole matter stands just as it did before the reconsidered vote was taken.

“Questions of *order* are to be decided by the moderator, but if any member thinks the decision incorrect, he can appeal to the meeting, whose decision is final.

“When the report of a committee is presented, it will of course be put on file. A vote to accept and adopt, is an expression of concurrence with the views of the committee.

“When a member has a motion to make, or wishes to speak on a pending motion, he must rise and address himself respectfully to the moderator.

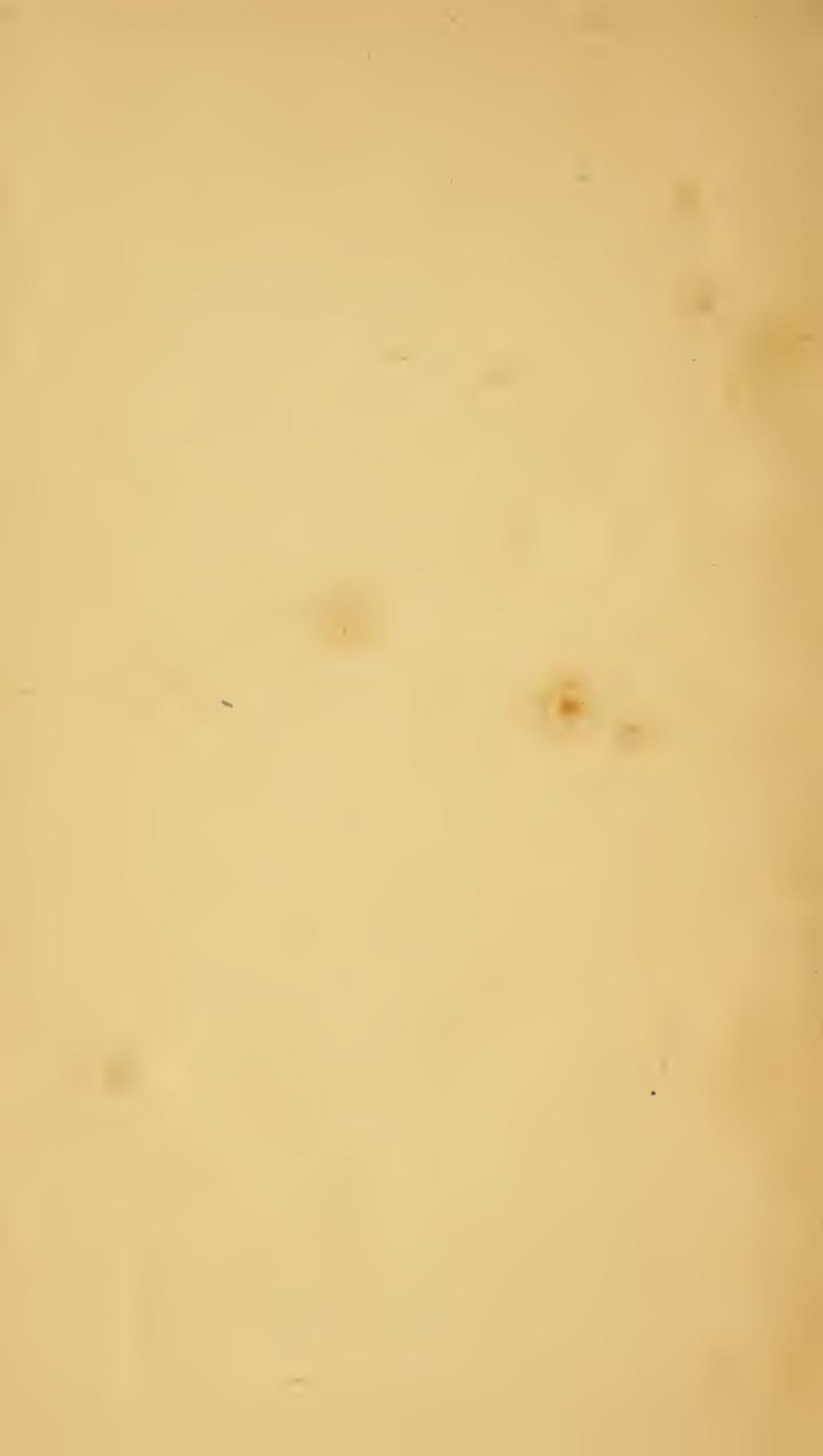
“A member who has a motion to make, may preface it with such remarks as explain his design; but with this exception, speaking is out of order, unless some definite proposition has been submitted and is under consideration.”

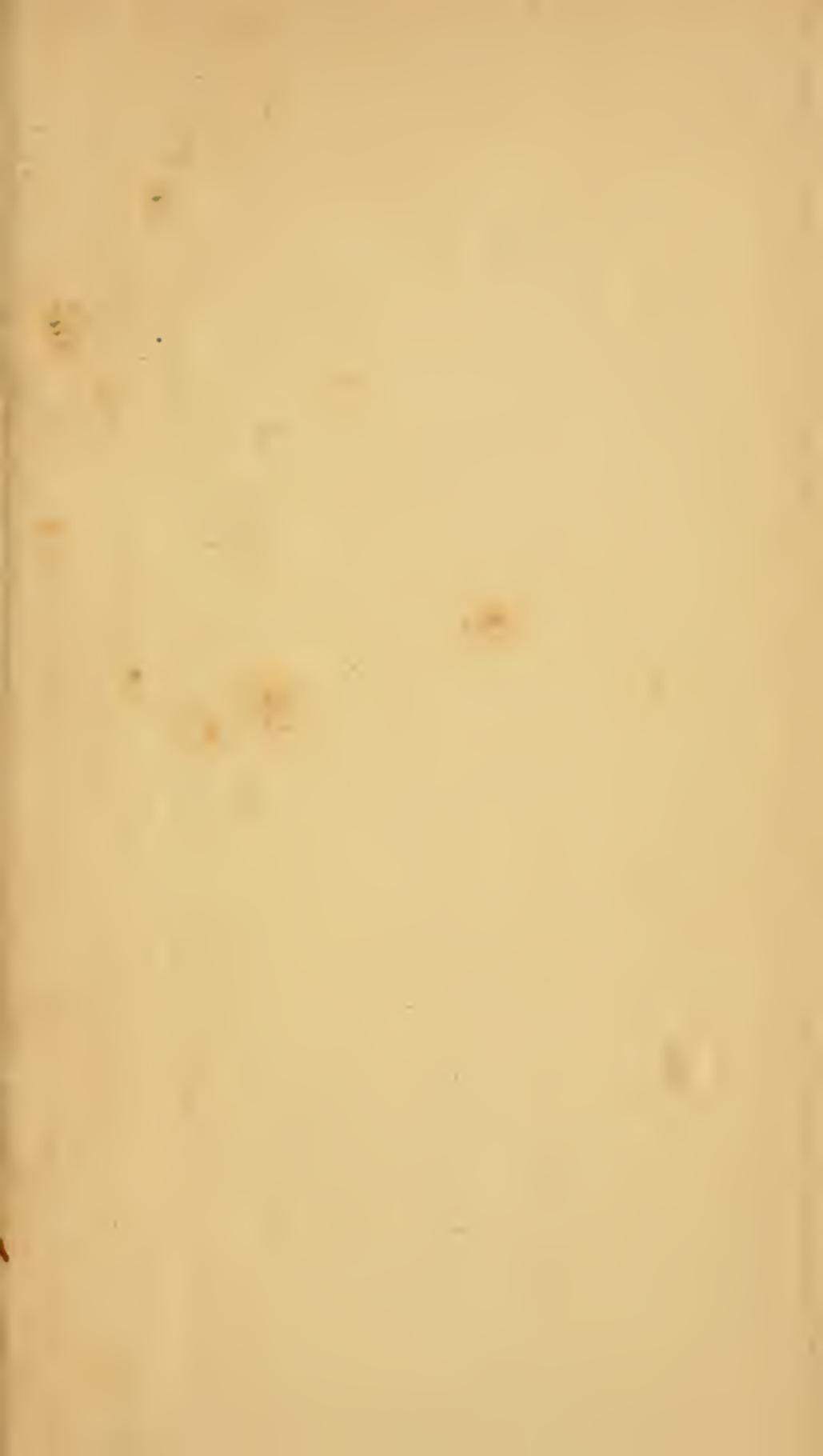
“These rules have been selected from ‘Jefferson’s Manual of Parliamentary Practice,’ or supplied from the known practice of the most respectable bodies. Many churches have brought upon themselves great trouble by a want of system in their proceedings. In fact, the maintenance of business order at all times according to established rules, cannot be too highly estimated. Over-legislation is a fault of churches, whether Congregational or others, as it is of political bodies. Churches should pass very few votes, and never any, without careful deliberation.”



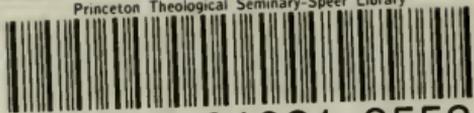








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