THE PRINCIPLES

OF

CHURCH POLITY

ILLUSTRATED BY

AN ANALYSIS OF MODERN CONGREGATIONALISM AND APPLIED TO CERTAIN IMPORTANT PRACTICAL QUESTIONS IN THE GOVERNMENT OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

SOUTHWORTH LECTURES

DELIVERED AT ANDOVER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY IN THE YEARS 1879-1881

BY

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TO

THE MEMORY OF HIS FATHER

WHO WAS FOR AN ENTIRE GENERATION

A MEMBER AND OFFICER OF A CHURCH OF CHRIST

AND WHO DIED BELOVED AND LAMENTED

THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED

BY THE AUTHOR

PREFACE.

If an apology is to be made for the appearance of these Lectures in the form of a book, it is best that this apology should express frankly the motives for such appearance which lie in the author's mind. It seemed to him in some sense due to the Lectureship which he has filled for three years, that it should add something to the general literature of its theme. Lectures written on paper, whatever they may accomplish as lectures, perish with the using; but the printed volume, whether it have many readers or few, at least for a time remains.

Moreover, the reading done in preparation for this writing has convinced the author that his treatment of the subject has some small claim to a certain originality and freshness of form. This impression has been confirmed by the testimony of a few friends, among whom, however, may be counted one who was not long since a master of the whole subject here treated in such a fragmentary way.

That there is now great need of candid and reasonable discussion of all those principles which enter into the constitution and government of Christian churches, few will doubt. It is certain that such need is manifested among those leaders and churches which bear the Congregational name; nor is this need confined to them alone. Not a few of the elder men in the ministry, of all denominations, seem to be losing

heart at sight of the rapid changes of form which are going on in the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Christian churches. And, of the younger men, the great majority are either indifferent to questions of church polity, except as these questions affect their own temporary success, or else are quite confused in thought, and vacillating in action, through lack of attention to the principles involved. If the author shall have any success whatever in his endeavor, it will be in helping those who belong to the latter class. In church polity, as in other matters of human thought and action, he who has a firm grasp upon principles need seldom go far or remain long astray; but he who, without this grasp upon principles, makes himself officious in the effort to mend the rents and seams in the "cake of custom," will probably end by either daubing over its surface, or parting it quite in two.

That some others besides the several score of students to whom he has already had the pleasure of imparting his thoughts may be equally interested in the principles of the true church polity, and in the practical handling of churches as accomplished in accordance with these principles, is the utmost that the author can hope.

It is a sad pleasure to him to know that the reading, and kindly, helpful criticism of his manuscript, was among the last things done by Dr. Leonard Bacon; that almost the last words heard by the author from this great and good man were words of interest and encouragement for the views herein expressed. This acknowledgment, which it was hoped to make to the living, must now be made in memory of the departed.

New Haven, Conn., January, 1882.

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LECTURE I.

THE PRINCIPLES OF CONGREGATIONALISM.

THE Method of Inquiry must be philosophical, as inquiring into causes, and historico-genetic, as tracing the growth of an important movement in history. The need of this method is made obvious by the facts that so many are perplexed by the question, What *is* Congregationalism? and that so few know what changes in forms and methods are compatible with its unchanging principles 30–35

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CERTAIN weaknesses have also hitherto characterized the development of Congregationalism in this country. A spirit of provincialism, a lack of versatility in adapting forms to circumstances, certain inheritances from the parish system, an excess of dogmatism in preaching, and a lack of organizing life-force, are among such weaknesses 339–344

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CONGREGATIONALISM AND FOREIGN MISSIONS.

THE question as to the *final cause* of the particular visible church should excite the distinctive interest of Congregationalists. The spread of the kingdom of God on earth is the one purpose of all Christian churches: this one purpose includes the two elements of edification and evangelizing 355–357

IN view of the responsibility assigned to particular churches by the principles of the true church polity, it seems surprising that the definitions of a church given by Congregational writers should so rarely include the final purpose of a church; thus neither Davenport nor Owen gives formal recognition to the missionary obligation of the particular visible church . 357–360

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NEW and surprising results may be expected from the unorganized efforts of individual missionary zeal. Each new church planted on missionary ground must become a new centre for use of the principle of "sanctified individualism" 377, 378

II. Every particular visible church is also bound to become a centre for the self-propagation of the gospel. The spread of the gospel is largely a matter of multiplying churches . . 379, 380

CONGREGATIONAL churches have a distinctive work in the multiplying of converts who shall be gathered into, and trained in, New-Testament churches. This work is feasible; for Congregational churches can be organized wherever converts are made; and missionary churches can be trained to be self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating . . . 381-384

THE great need is, however, that the principles of the gospel and the true church polity should control the churches at home.

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This control would effect, (1) The culture of intelligence, (2) The growth of interest leading to the use of means, and, (3) The multiplying and increased efficiency of means . 384–386

III. The principles which underlie the communion of churches should be evoked and used in missionary work. But more hardness in forms, and more pressure to secure uniformity, will deaden, rather than quicken, missionary zeal . . . 387–389

The end of evangelizing the world is the true end before all the churches in their collective working; but the special end of all Congregational churches is, having converted men, to gather them into truly Christian communions, and so convert them into means for converting the world 389–392

A few of the means which may be employed thus to utilize the communion of Congregational churches for the conversion of the world are finally suggested 392–395

LECTURE XII.

PRESENT AND PROSPECTIVE TENDENCIES OF CONGREGATIONALISM.

In examining the tendencies which are at present influencing the Congregational system of church order, we need to keep in mind the principles and their applications, as already discussed; yet the most careful and skilful application of the true principles of church polity will not secure a practical infallibility 396–399

When important contingencies which have not been contemplated arise, a reference and adherence to principles will secure the wisest and safest conduct. The common law of this system of church order provides, however, a set of rules and customs which may be used whenever their use is not virtually contradictory of the principles. It is always Congregational to refer to principles 399–401

The student of Congregationalism should become its adherent, if at all, from principle 401, 402

Among the present tendencies which make themselves felt in the Congregational system of church order is a spirit of extreme restlessness. This spirit occasions many unthinking proposals for changes 402, 403

The spirit of restlessness is, however, a common manifestation in the entire life of Christendom. In the special case of church polity the desire of change is not so much the result of an intelligent conviction that the old forms are defective, as the result of the general feeling of restlessness. All institutions and customs, and all the denominations and sects feel the impulses of this same spirit 403-407

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THE feeling of dissatisfaction with the present organization of the Christian Church is not an unmixed evil 407, 408

THIS feeling has, however, mistaken the causes of evils and the subjects for change. There is need of candid examination and fair argument to show *what* changes should be introduced. In general, the real grounds for any defensible dissatisfaction are not in the principles of Congregationalism, or even in their ancient ways of application, so much as in the indifference and ignorance of its own adherents 408–411

THE tendency to exalt the beneficial results of so-called force and authority is another feature of our present condition. This tendency is not new: Increase Mather complained of it as present in the synods of 1657 and 1662. To attempt to drive measures without fair and deliberate debate, and appeal to reason and the Word of God, is, nevertheless, uncongregational, 411–413

THE tendency to depress argument, and exalt the force of majorities, is present in political as well as in ecclesiastical affairs, 413–415

THE tendency to indirection is the most baleful one of all. This tendency also has been manifest in the past, but is contrary to the genius of the Congregational church polity. This polity favors "straightforward" conduct, candid and frank expression of views 415–418

BUT indirection is the method of politics, and it has crept into the churches: it is especially to be hated and dreaded . . 418, 419

THESE evil tendencies are combated by certain tendencies toward good, among which the drawing of the churches together in informal communion for the spread of the gospel is the most encouraging 419, 420

IN answer to the question, What is the outlook for Congregationalism? so far as changes in its rules and customs are concerned, no answer can be given with confidence. It is possible that some new and influential symbol or catechism may be constructed, or that through the National Council, or otherwise, some expression of an organic unity may be attained. But it is not clear that any such uniformity would secure a real unity. It is certain that the effort to force such uniformity would result in schism 420–423

WE may confidently expect, however, to see the true doctrine of the church gain adherents, and the principles of this doctrine more and more realized in the practices of the churches. To this doctrine the future belongs. Indeed, in some practical regards, the doctrine of the Church is destined to be regarded as the most important of the Christian doctrines 423–426

WHILE, then, no intelligent adherent of the principles of the true Church Polity would wish to see the rules and customs of present Congregationalism propagated everywhere, every such adherent expects to see his principles triumph everywhere, 426–428

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THE triumph of the principles will bring that condition of the Church for which Christ prayed: the condition is that, not simply of an invisible spiritual unity, but of a *manifested* unity, 428–431

To establish the principles which make possible such a manifested unity the early New-England Congregationalists suffered long and much: their descendants have no right simply to crave one place among the other denominations or sects . . 431–433

INTRODUCTION.

THE nature of our theme, and of its original treatment in a Course of Lectures to theological students, seems to make necessary, on presentation of the opinions advocated to a larger and less strictly classified audience, some special introduction. This introduction should gather up and consider together certain ones of the more important and distinctive of those opinions, which, from the very conditions belonging to a lectureship, have been dwelt upon only briefly in various separate portions of the entire course. The reader may have his interest elicited by knowing from the first what are some of the assumptions made by the author; what, also, are some of the conclusions at which he arrives. And since the reader and the author cannot, like the student in attendance before the lecturer, come to a common point of view by means of reciprocal question and answer, it may be helpful if some clew to the course traversed is from the outset placed within the reader's hand.

Moreover, the statements made and the language employed might appear, in certain cases, to be inexact or even offensive, if unexplained; and this might happen on account of mistaking the precise views which it was intended to uphold. The author, then, particu-

larly requests that the subsequent detailed treatment of the various subjects which are discussed shall all be regarded in the light of the postulates and explanations made in the Introduction.

In the first place, then, it is assumed throughout these Discourses, that the doctrine of the proper organization and government of the Christian Church is a doctrine of no mean order or small importance in the Christian system of truth. There is little doubt, indeed, that the popular estimate tends to place this doctrine very low down, if not completely below, the entire scale. The reasons for this degrading estimate are not difficult to find. They lie, in part, in the historic fact that the various forms of church polity have been discussed and prosecuted with much sectarian bigotry and ignorant zeal. Moreover, the discussion and prosecution of these forms have almost habitually resulted in segregating about points of minor importance those who should rather have been united around the great things of their common Christian faith. Indifference to all mere questions of ecclesiastical organization and government has been the inevitable re-action from such bigotry and zeal. On the whole, it has happily come about, that to raise the cry of a sectarian or denominational name is to cut one's self off from the regard of the better intellects, and from the sympathies of the larger hearts.

But, like all re-actions of feeling, this one has often been, in its own way, as blind and unreasoning as the sectarian zeal which originally called the re-action forth. For surely the present age of human thought is not the age in which to depreciate questions of organization and government, whether they concern the Church of Christ, or the civil estate. To be wholly indifferent to

all such questions would simply separate one wholly from the themes upon which the human mind is now bestowing much of its best thought, the human will much of its most strenuous endeavor. And certainly no other inquiries more quickly and forcefully move the feelings of men than those which concern the right construction and management of both Church and State.

It ought, indeed, to be unnecessary to argue the importance of a true theory and right practice of church polity. But the indifference in some quarters to such subjects renders it pardonable that every writer upon church polity should, at least in a few words, plead the dignity of his theme.

Such a plea may appear to have compelling force when we dwell even for a moment upon the thought suggested above. The interest of mankind in the construction and government of civil affairs is, indeed, great, and constantly increasing. But modern history is not able to draw a hard and fixed line between civil and ecclesiastical developments in government. How much our own civil polity owes to the church polity of the Puritans; how much civil liberty in England was affected by the religious liberty which had been achieved in New England; how much, in general, the world owes for its civil freedom to those who have thought and suffered to achieve freedom in the Church, — will be briefly indicated in some of the lectures of this course. It is fortunate for those who are so unconcerned in all questions of church polity, and so especially cold toward the Congregational system of church order, that the founders of this church order were not, in like manner, unconcerned. It is fortunate for those descendants of Puritans who have come to regard their ancestral estate

as a mere entailment of expedients, that their own fathers did not regard it in the same way. In fine, we cannot wholly separate the foundations of civil and religious freedom; we cannot make the construction of the Church a matter of no importance to the State; we cannot construct the Church after the ideal of a true Church polity without influencing the State; we cannot permanently maintain interest in either one form of organization to the exclusion of interest also in the other.

And that this close relation between ecclesiastical polity and civil polity is not merely theoretical, the entire history of Christendom abundantly testifies. The organific ideas which predominate in any special region or era will shape largely alike the structure of both Church and State. This community of life and also of form is especially exemplified in much of modern history. We might, then, claim by an appeal to facts, that scarcely any other questions have proved of more practical importance both to the Church and to mankind than those which concern her right construction and control. What is the true Church Polity? Whence do we derive the theory of it? and how far find it exemplified in any one, or in many, of the existing forms? What measures and institutions are consistent with its principles, and what openly or implicitly contradict them? These are inquiries of superior interest to the welfare of man, both as a Christian, and as a citizen or subject of civil government. The influence of the answers given to these inquiries by the different forms of ordering the Christian Church ramifies throughout the entire structure of society.

And, if we consider the same inquiries in their interior relations to the system of Christian truth, our

conclusion as to their importance is strengthened and enlarged. It is possible, indeed, to give to a church polity only a frail and transient connection with the greater and more vital Christian truths. It is impossible to give to certain forms of church polity any other than this frail and transient connection. Many of the former detailed disputes concerning the customs and order of the New-Testament churches have been of late, by a fairer and more comprehensive exegesis, nearly or quite settled. The advocates of different forms of polity now no longer need to debate so hotly what the early Christians did in the construction and government of their churches.[1] They are less likely than they once were to hold forth the example of the Jewish Church for imitation by believers of Christ at this nineteenth century. And yet it would almost seem, that, the more agreement is attained as to the facts of the earliest Christian church polity, the less weight is given to the argument from those facts in favor of copying precisely that earliest polity. Nor is this manner of handling the argument to be by any means wholly condemned;

[1] The recent work of Edwin Hatch — *The Organization of the Early Christian Churches*, Bampton Lectures for 1880 — presents with admirable scholarship, clearness, and candor, the facts as to the polity of the churches in the era immediately following the New-Testament writings. All the more important features of the Congregational doctrine as to the proper organization of Christian churches may be seen still predominant in the age to which the hierarchical system of church order has been wont most confidently to appeal. Mr. Hatch shows, that, in the second century, "ordination meant appointment and admission to office, and that it was conceived as being of the same nature with appointment and admission to civil office." This doctrine is, even in language, almost identical with that of the Puritans. Mr. Hatch even makes it appear probable that imposition of hands was not in that age regarded as an essential element of the rite of ordination. The argument does not, however, seem to controvert the teaching of these Lectures as to the view of the New Testament concerning the dynamic "laying-on of hands."

for the deeper and stronger connections which the true theory of church polity may make with the most vital truths of the Christian religion, are not to be reached in the direct way. Proof-texts for schemes and theories of church polity are subject to the general laws of exegesis and biblical theology, as those sciences are understood and practised by the mind of to-day. The mistaken assumption that the earliest churches did all things best, or are in all respects a pattern to modern churches, or constituted themselves in the details of their system under orders which bore the sanction of apostles and even of Jesus himself, vitiates the argument as it is often too hastily derived from these texts. The view of this Course of Lectures intends somewhat more than the above-mentioned argument, when it appears everywhere to connect the true church polity with important and indisputable Christian truths.

We believe that the ideal construction and government of Christian churches flows forth theoretically from certain undoubted propositions regarding the relations of redeemed man with Christ and of redeemed men with one another. That each believer is a priest and king; that each church should be constituted only of confessed believers; that each church thus constituted is responsible in things spiritual to Christ as its only head and ruler; that Christian churches should commune with one another in the things of the gospel; that every Christian, and each local community of Christians, while seeking truth in the light of time-honored customs and human authorities, is, nevertheless, both permitted and obligated to change opinion and practice, as the appearance of truth from the word of God and the Christian consciousness is seen to change, — these are statements intimately connected with the

innermost nature of the religion of our Lord. To deny the statements does not leave this nature unaffected. That the doctrine of those relations in which the individual believer and the separate community of believers stand to the Holy Spirit is an important doctrine, none will be found to deny. Upon all these and kindred matters of the Christian faith two great classes of opinions, with their corresponding drifts and tendencies, everywhere appear: of these the one is the priestly and hierarchical, the other the more popular and prophetic. As the author has occasion to say again, — and both times with the deepest reverence, — a certain theory of the Christian Church *democratizes* the alliances and gifts of the Holy Spirit. But a certain other theory of the Church tends to make the divine spiritual work with the human soul more mediate and aristocratic. Without asserting, in this connection, which of these two tendencies of thought leads us to the true idea and practice of church polity, it is enough to point out how intimately this idea and practice are related to the profoundest Christian truths.

The doctrine of a true church polity is, moreover, closely related to the doctrine of Sacred Scripture. To understand this statement in its fullest import, one must see in it much more than a mere declaration that a skilful use of proof-texts will enable the advocate of this polity to appeal to direct New-Testament authority. We must think more broadly yet, if we wish to secure permanent scriptural authority for any specific system of church order. Attention has already been called to the assumptions which may underlie and vitiate the so-called biblical argument, when managed in the ordinary way. But, on the other hand, it does not seem probable, on *a priori* grounds, that the Christian Church has

been left entirely without divine direction in the Word of God as to its own constitution and government. And should we be obliged in this matter to do as Luther did, — to distinguish between the books, words, and letters of the Bible and the Word of God which is found in them, — we should with confidence endeavor by all means to discover the truth upon this one subject as upon other portions of the Christian faith.

We believe, indeed, that the Scriptures teach with sufficient clearness what is the true way of constituting and controlling churches of Christ; but they do not offer this teaching in the form either of express divine injunction, or of early example designed in all its details to be a perpetual model. They teach, rather, those principles concerning both the essence and the form of Christian living which are for the control of all individuals and particular churches. But they do somewhat more than this. They teach concretely and historically. They give us the narrative — meagre, it is true, and in some respects obscure and debatable — of the early institutions which embodied these principles. By the voice of principles, and by the voice of historical illustrations and enforcements of these principles, they invite into the right way, and warn from that which is wrong.

We have, moreover, the witness of the Christian consciousness, and the testimony of Christian experience, extending over eighteen hundred years. By diligent use of all these means it is quite as possible to discover and set forth the true biblical and Christian doctrine of Church Polity as any other doctrine in the congeries of allied truths. Indeed, the principles which underlie this especial doctrine are so plain in their meaning, and so clear in their application to the case in hand, that the argument derived from them should seem especially plain and clear.

We may now briefly set forth the opinion held in these Lectures as to the divine right of some one among the many forms of church polity. In not a few cases the author will appear to be using the terms, "the true Church Polity" and "Congregationalism," as interchangeable terms. And yet he is the farthest possible from believing that any existing sect, or denomination, or so-called "church,"—meaning by the word "church" a particular way of ordering a considerable number of believers,—can claim to exist by exclusive divine right. The thinking world is so tired of the sophistry and arrogance involved in such a claim, that it is nearly ready to refuse it henceforth a patient and respectful hearing. That no hierarchical system of church government, with whatever modifications it may be accompanied, can assume to represent the Apostolic Churches, has been shown again and again. But what shall we say of those democratic forms which have originated from time to time in the effort to repeat precisely the institutions and experiences of the Apostolic Age? Of some of them we must indeed say that their assumptions are no less arrogant than those of the hierarchical forms, while their imitations of the churches of the apostles are scarcely more successful. We should justly leave our own views open to the charge of arrogant assumption, if we permitted them to be understood as claiming for the present polity of Congregational churches the sole title to a place beside those of the Apostolic Age. For, firstly, we do not think that the true church polity calls for a simple imitation of the forms of the earliest Christian churches; and, secondly, neither the Congregational churches, nor those of any other known church order, precisely represent those ancient forms; and, thirdly, it would be quite

possible, at least for a time, to imitate the Apostolic Churches most closely, and yet be farthest removed from a faithful adoption of the principles of the true Church Polity. The imitation of early Christianity, like the imitation of Christ, should be one of heart and spirit rather than of precise forms.

Yet we are by no means without the intention and the courage to make for modern Congregationalism a special claim. For the principles of the true church polity, the ideal way of constituting and governing Christian churches, we claim that they are obligatory upon, and applicable to, all times and conditions of human society by divine right. For Congregationalism, we claim that it has in unique fashion, and with unexampled power and extent of influence, embodied and illustrated these principles. In so far as it has embodied and illustrated them, it has hitherto existed by divine right. In so far as it now embodies and illustrates these same principles with more of intelligence and self-conscious fidelity than any other system of church order, it has now a special right to the claim of being most like the true church polity. But in so far as it has departed from these principles, and has either neglected their propagation, or descended into the arena of sectarian strife, we have for it no claim to make.

A certain divine right to existence not only, but also to supremacy, belongs to the true church polity. The right belongs to the polity, when considered as a matter of principles which are embodied in the proper construction and control of Christian churches. Within certain limits different forms of constructing and controlling these churches may agree in their acceptance and exemplification of these principles. But such

forms as either ignore or contravene these principles lose so far forth their right to existence: they are to be regarded as products of human ignorance and selfishness, however strenuous and exclusive they may make their claim to a divine right. The specific details of the forms which shall embody the principles are indeed left, under the divine Spirit, to the skill of men and to the changing exigencies of history; but the principles themselves are fundamental, and are given in the Word of God. That specific system of church order will, then, have a pre-eminent claim to a divine right, which with most intelligence conceives, and with most effect realizes, the principles involved. And this claim cannot be perpetuated in a *name;* as, for example, the Catholic Church, the Church of England, or the Congregational church order. It must rather be perpetually renewed by showing a superior power to hold the principles of a true church polity, and to give them concrete manifestation in the multiplication of churches which are instituted and governed according to these principles.

But the following questions will, of course, at once present themselves to every thinker upon our theme: Have not all systems of church order exemplified, to some extent at least, the principles of a true church polity? And may not different systems at different eras, and under the differing circumstances of history, do this equally well? or may not some system be the nearest approach to the ideal possible at one time, another system at another time? Moreover, how far are the limitations of form given in the principles themselves, so that we can consider the choice of each particular system as involving only questions of expediency? A brief answer to each of these three questions is in place at this point.

Our reply to the first one of them must consist in making distinctions. Doubtless the same truth holds good of the polity of different groups of Christian churches which holds good of their doctrine. The essential and fundamental things of Christian faith may remain undestroyed, although buried fathoms deep in heresies upon unessential or less important truths. Nor can we tell with confidence precisely at what point a body of nominal Christians must be said to have passed beyond all claim to the essential faith in Jesus Christ. Thus may one or more of the principles which will be enumerated as constituting the essence of a true church polity be greatly obscured, or even wholly contravened; and yet it may not be safe to affirm that the community thus in part wrongly constituted and controlled, is, therefore, not to be called a true Christian church. For this reason, principled Congregationalism can rightly claim that it is the only true church polity; and yet it may be the farthest possible from speaking of other systems of church order as though they were not also churches of Christ.

To illustrate by a single application of the general truth: It is a principle of the true Church Polity that the local community shall make the attempt to constitute itself upon a basis of regenerate membership, because this basis is the only right basis for constituting a Christian church. The best realization of this principle, however, Congregationalists have attempted to attain, under differing circumstances, in differing ways; sometimes by written or oral confession made to the church in open assembly; sometimes by the same confession made to the officers of the church; sometimes by placing the individual upon his own silent recognizance on entering into covenant with the church. Sometimes

they have virtually abandoned their own principle, and have either passed over the sole main condition specified in the principle, or else have added other co-ordinate conditions which they had no right to make. Meanwhile, certain other systems of church order have been constituting their membership by baptism and catechetical discipline. But if this latter method of constituting the particular churches has been accompanied by belief in the dogma of baptismal regeneration, then the difference between it and the Congregational way may be resolved into a difference about the doctrine of regeneration rather than a disagreement in church polity alone. If judged, then, by adherence to this one principle of a regenerate membership, the Congregationalist may retain his name after virtually annulling the principle; and the practical disregard of the principle shown by the Lutheran or the Episcopalian may be due to a theoretic difference in some region of dogma other than that which is circumscribed by questions merely of polity. But we should not be able to declare that either of them was not a member of the visible church of Christ; for the error upon this one principle of church polity might be by no means complete, and therefore thoroughly destructive of the principle. Moreover, there are other principles which enter as coordinate or subordinate elements into the true church polity; and any particular system of church order may be saved from utter and hopeless departure from the ideal system by its hold upon some other principles — one or more — of this polity.

In fine, just as it is adherence in faith and life to Jesus Christ which constitutes and controls the invisible church, and renders it a true spiritual communion, so it is fidelity to the principles of the ideal church

polity which constitutes the members of this spiritual communion into visible churches, and which controls them in their relations as rightly constituted churches. Complete failure in faith and life would destroy the church invisible: complete failure in fidelity to the principles of the ideal polity would destroy the visible churches. In case of such failure, the organized bands of individuals would be, no matter what presumptuous titles they might assume and receive, not Christian "churches" in any sense of the word.

It would, then, be difficult, if not invidious, to distribute amongst the different sects and denominations of historical Christianity the due measures in which their claims must be admitted or denied. But in general we may allege, that the greater the violations made by any sect, or denomination, or so-called "church," of the principles of a true church polity, the greater has probably also been the presumption with which it has claimed to be the only true Christian Church. Hierarchism is a gross violation of these principles; but hierarchism is most apt to arrogate to itself the title of "*the* church." Hierarchism in Christian institutions is, however, so bound down by certain Christian principles, that it is difficult for it completely to contravene them: therefore it is not to be concluded that even the most hierarchical churches are not true visible churches of Christ. They are certainly, however, not the chief or sole representatives of the true church polity.

In the light of the foregoing remarks the next question admits of a briefer reply. May not different systems of church order, in the various times and circumstances of history, equally well embody the true ideal? and may not some one system be the nearest approach to the ideal possible at one time, another system at

another? With the right implied limitations, both parts of this question may receive an affirmative answer. In church polity we must, indeed, distinguish between unchanging and essential principles and the forms which body them forth. One particular visible church may, under a given kind of circumstances, best secure the practice corresponding to the principle of regenerate membership by one form; another church, under differing circumstances, by a different form. The principle that each believer is a king and priest under Christ — the principle of individual equality and self-control — may be less infringed upon by a board of elders chosen by the church than by the agent of some independent society sent from without to the church. The autonomy of the local church may be more compatible with certain forms of the Consociation than with certain kinds of conduct indulged in by so-called Congregational councils. Indeed, the unworthy and mischievous use of the one-man power may become more onerous in loosely organized churches called Congregational than in other churches called Presbyterian or Episcopal.

And, doubtless, we must in the matter of church polity, as in all matters of the divine pedagogy, consider the laws of historical development. We may even admit that the strong hand and rough chastening of a compacted hierarchical system were needed to conduct the Churches of the Middle Ages over their rough and dangerous way. We may take account of the aptitude of certain forms of church order, far from ideally perfect, to deal with men who are themselves without respect for, and even knowledge of, the ideal; just as the grossest and most material doctrines of future punishment, though false, have been needed

to restrain men of gross and material tendencies and ideas. But in all these admissions we must not withdraw our eyes from the ideal. It is that toward which we are striving; and the striving is itself dependent upon the clearness with which we conceive, and the glow with which we love, our ideal. Besides all this, the success, for the time, of that which is imperfect, is not due to its worst elements, but to its better and more nearly perfect ones. Nor in the one matter of church polity do we at all believe the assumption that gross violations of the ideal principles succeed best even amidst the most trying ordeals. It will be the purpose of one part of this Course of Lectures to show the falsity of this assumption. These ideal principles are in themselves adapted to man as man; and in experience they operate thoroughly well with man wherever, and under whatever conditions, he becomes a redeemed man. Whatever trials and difficulties so-called Congregationalism may have experienced, they have not been due to its fidelity to the principles which underlie its system of church order. They have, doubtless, for the most part, been rather due to the displacement of principles, and of the consideration given to the best forms of embodying principles, by views of mere expediency, and by consideration of what is easiest and most immediately profitable.

How far, then, we ask in the third place, are questions of church polity to be treated as questions of expediency? or, in other words, how far do those principles of church polity which control as by divine right, carry along with them their own limitations of form? To answer this question in every detail would be to provide rules and expedients which should cover every possible case. This kind of answer can only be arrived

at in the unending process of experience itself. But in general we may say that the first, and last, and most important thing of all, is a firm grasp upon, and unyielding devotion to, the principles themselves. One of these principles, however, — viz., that which I have called "the common-law principle," — provides for the construction of practical rules, precepts, and maxims, by accumulated experience. It is a principle not to depart from the custom which is of good experience, except upon grounds of principle itself; so that in great numbers of instances, where the more abstract principles would afford no very clear guidance, this common-law principle bids us act according to the results of aggregated experience, and thus affords the clearest guidance.

We assume, then, in brief, that the true Church Polity involves not only those principles which are supreme, and never to be set one side, but also a certain indefinite and changing mass of accumulated precepts, customs, and maxims, which are of themselves temporarily within the limitations of the higher principles. These precepts, customs, and maxims *may be* determined by considerations of expediency; but they are never to be so determined in contravention of principle. They furnish the more minute lines of form within which the spirit moves. The spirit may move without the lines whenever it is expedient so to do: it must transgress and break them whenever it becomes principle so to do. Unchanging principle as the spirit, but a certain body of forms which it may be principle or expediency either to break or to keep, — such is the relation of spirit and form in the true church polity.

But let not the reader suppose that the author has held his subject always in mid-air. It is, indeed, the

actually existing institution, that, more effectively than any theoretical statement, illustrates and enforces the principles upon which it is built. Principles which are designed to be embodied in concrete institutions are peculiarly subject to the tests of experience. It would be of small avail to commend a particular system of church order by a well-considered theory, if the practical working of that system were a constant concrete proof of the error or insufficiency of the theory itself. Concerning Congregationalism it is often thought, and not rarely alleged, that, though plausible in theory, it has been much of a failure in fact.

It is the view constantly insisted upon in these Lectures, that the principles of the true Church Polity must submit themselves to the test of experience and fact. A just theory of constituting and governing "particular visible churches" — to use language familiar to the student of early Congregational literature — must justify itself by being able to constitute and control such churches. Now, it is often alleged against modern Congregationalism, that it has both failed to propagate churches with commendable rapidity, and also wisely and efficiently to control the churches already constituted under the order which it commends. How far true is this charge will be in part shown in the Tenth Lecture. That the complaint of failure has been greatly exaggerated, the author has no doubt; that it is in part well founded, he has just as little doubt. But whatever failure must be admitted is not to be charged against the principles, as though they were too abstract and ideal for their own work, but rather against those workmen, who, forgetting the real nature of these principles, have endeavored to force them into a work to which they are not adapted; for the principles of a

true church polity are not well adapted to build up a large and thriving denomination or sect. To propagate themselves, not simply in abstract form, but also in their concrete embodiment in churches constituted according to them, they are well adapted; and, thus considered, Congregationalism will multiply its members, and receive to itself the adherence of all Christian men: thus considered, it has already made wonderful conquests amongst all denominations, systems of church order, and sects.

To be yet more definite in the Introduction, the author must confess beforehand that he, too, has much fault to find with modern Congregationalism, and certain changes to propose for its future enlarged success. This fault-finding the reader will discover where it occurs: he will, the author believes, discover that it is somewhat fairly and kindly and thoroughly done. But the two changes for the improvement of Congregationalism which in our opinion most need to be made, may be mentioned together in the present connection.

The mismanagements and miscarriages of modern Congregationalism in this country chiefly concern two important factors in its system of instituting and governing the churches of Christ. Of these two, the one is the propagation of Congregational churches: the other is the construction, as respects its officers, of the local church.

What should be the method of propagating churches both at home and on foreign fields is made, in part, the subject of the Tenth and Eleventh Lectures. From them it will be seen that the adherents of a church polity, which claims to be on principle true and effective, have no right to refrain from propagating that polity everywhere that the churches planted by them will grow.

They do not, indeed, carry the gospel to men as a sectarian or denominational enterprise; but, as they carry the gospel to men, they take pains that the fruits of the gospel shall be garnered in local churches which are constituted and governed in the true way. If any do not hold the principles of the true church polity, and have no desire to see them embodied in the form of concrete particular churches, then they can, at most, only choose one of two courses: they can either propagate the sect as a sectarian enterprise, or they can propagate Christianity with perfect indifference to the form in which its adherents unite as members of the visible church. The latter course is the one to which the nobler minds who are not settled in views of church polity naturally incline. But local churches must be constituted and governed in some way; and the history of the Christian religion shows that it is by no means a matter of small concern what is their chosen way. The man, then, who believes that questions concerning the constitution and government of the churches of Christ are in any respect questions of principle, will desire to see the principles of his chosen church polity embodied in the actual constitution and government of all churches.

Congregationalists should, then, have definitely before them, in spreading the gospel at home and abroad, the policy of gathering converts into self-governing and self-propagating churches. This they should do, not with sectarian zeal, or with insistance upon the things of minor importance, but with charity, confidence, and self-denial.

In the opinion of the author, the fact that apostolic care and (if the word be not offensive) authority are needed in the propagation of churches upon the newer fields, both at home and abroad, neither destroys the

efficiency of Congregationalism, nor changes any of its important forms. The right of him who has in Christ's name planted a church, to watch over and prune and train that which he has planted, is not vested in Episcopal or Presbyterian forms of church government alone. It is a right which belongs to the very nature of the case: it is a right in which every preacher of the gospel, and founder of a community of his own converts, is the equal of the Apostle Paul. To plant churches, on the frontier or abroad, with the money and men of older Congregational churches, and then leave the new communities to go astray, to languish and fail, under a semblance of ordering their own affairs, — this is not so much Congregationalism as it is without sound Christian sense. The evangelist or the missionary, if he go under his own control, or the evangelizing local church or body of churches, if they send forth the messenger in responsibility to themselves, have all the obligation and authority for firmly establishing the churches which they plant that belonged to the Apostle Paul. Would that they always had also his inspired wisdom and affection.

If, then, the Congregational Churches of the land will enter into the work of propagating other self-sustaining and self-controlling churches, as the concrete manifestations of the principles both of the Christian religion and of a true church polity; and if such use of apostolic authority and helpfulness as becomes the case of churches planted in regions where Christian institutions are new, be faithfully and judiciously made; then will Congregationalism give no reason for the complaint that it is weak in united effort, and lacking in power to multiply itself. And what added impetus to this possible thrift in growth might come if its various

ecclesiastical gatherings — Conventions, Associations, Consociations, and National Council, — will cease from their vain contention over questions that stir the spirit of schism, and consider rather what plans may be devised for the better union of our churches in positive and aggressive work, he who has much frequented such gatherings knows far better than he can be told.

And finally, in the opinion of the author, the principal cause of those difficulties which are experienced in the working of modern Congregational churches, as at present constituted, lies in the fact that they are *not officered in the scriptural and reasonable way.*

In all cases of difficulty and danger, the tendency of genuine Congregationalism is to direct attention toward the local and individual church. There, in most cases, will the disease be found situated: there must the remedy be applied. We should not, then, expect to free ourselves from rising embarrassments by increasing the functions of the clergy, or by a more rigid organization of the body of the churches, or by appointing men to rule over the churches at large in lieu of cardinals or bishops. We should rather, first of all, inquire into the conditions which shape the existence, and limit the activities, of the local church. Most of the practical difficulties in the working of modern Congregational churches in this country will — I repeat — be found due to a wrong construction, as respects its officers, of the local church.

It is the Congregational doctrine, that the covenant, or solemn compact of believers to live together as Christians in a church way, with so much, indeed, of confession of faith as is necessary to entering into the covenant, is that which "essentiates" the form of a church. Any number of Christians, then, who thus

covenant together are essentially a Christian church. But they are not a completely organized church until they have officers; and they will not be likely to be effective as a church, unless they have habitually the right classes of efficient officers. A church without officers is not a completely organized church: it is a lame and ineffective institution, if, indeed, it can be dignified with the name of an institution.

The classes of officers in the local church which are known to the Congregational polity are two, — the deacon, and the elder or presbyter-bishop. The number and nature of these offices is not a matter of indifference: it is not a matter of small consequence whether any particular church be lacking in one or both. The elder may, indeed, act as a deacon; or the deacon may take upon himself the functions of the presbyter-bishop; but the two functions are two, not one, and both classes of offices should be kept constantly filled. Otherwise the church becomes at once an imperfectly organized church.

Moreover, the example of the New-Testament churches coincides with the reason of the case and with the conclusions of experience, in recommending that there be constituted within every local church a *board*, or body of elders, who shall be chosen by the church, ordained to their office, and held as officers responsible for the discharge of the trusts committed to them. In other words, a well-organized church has several officers who are chosen by the church from its own membership, to lead, and, within certain restrictions, to act for the church in the management of its affairs. Such officers are, and should be called, the elders or presbyter-bishops of the local church. Nor is it a matter of indifference whether there be only one, or more than one, in this

office for each local church; whether, again, he who exercises the functions of the office be a member, or not, of the church over which he acts as officer. That he who is *de facto* presbyter-bishop of the local church should not be a member of that church, is contrary to an important principle of the true church polity; but that any one man should habitually be the only presbyter-bishop of a local church, is the very germ and essence of monarchical church government. In the New-Testament churches the elders appear everywhere as in the plural, as a college, or senate, or corporate body; but they are also everywhere made known to us as constituted a college or senate by the incorporating choice of the church itself.

The practice of modern Congregationalism in this country has widely departed from this example. Its theory has followed its practice, as though to support and justify the departure; but the theory is as vicious as the practice has proved injurious. Some of the earlier Congregational churches endeavored to provide for the functions of the presbyter-bishops by placing two persons in this office, — the pastor or teacher, and the elder, or the ruling and teaching elder; but they somewhat arbitrarily distinguished the duties and powers of the two. As early as Owen, we find certain persons beginning "to maintain that there is no need of but one pastor, bishop, or elder;" and Cotton Mather tells us that the ruling elders were almost extinct in his day. But the practice of Congregational churches has not been content to rest at the reduction of the number of presbyter-bishops to one: it has, in the great majority, ceased to require, as an essential of an organized local church, even that one. It has thus come about that large numbers of our churches never have any pres-

byter-bishop, except as the office is sporadically and temporarily exercised by one who is neither ordained to it, nor even a member of the local church which he serves; and, in the constantly recurring event of their being left without even this semblance of such an officer, they have, *as churches*, no acknowledged Christian leadership or organized activity. It is true that the Deacons and the Committee are, in part, the substitutes for the College of Presbyter-bishops. So far, however, as these men serve as substitutes, they would much better serve as recognized and ordained officers of the church: so far as they are incapable of the functions of this college, they are not substitutes for it. This practice, moreover, we have tried to support by an impotent theory of church government, constructed neither from pure principles nor in accord with the best experience. We have tried to make theoretically valid the proposition that one clergyman, peripatetic, and irresponsible to the church of which he is not a member, can become a substitute for a whole college of duly chosen and ordained elders of the local church. Thus have practice and theory combined to incapacitate many of our churches in their best estate from acting as fully organized and officered, while in their worst estate they are left in pitiful condition indeed.

What are the true views, and what should be the practice of the churches, — as these matters appear to the author, — is partially disclosed in several Lectures of the Course. Not for the sake of making invidious distinctions are these views expressed, but because there is at this time no other so alarming feature in the operation of the Congregational polity as this one, — that *the office of the genuine presbyter-bishop is fast becoming extinct.* It follows that our churches are fast

becoming unorganized and imperfect Christian churches. And again there follows this fact a train of most mischievous practical results. That this wrong practice will be corrected by increased rigor of ecclesiasticism is a delusive hope. To make a more compacted and controllable order of the clergy will not furnish the churches with presbyter-bishops who are selected from their own membership, and solemnly ordained as to a sacred trust. The remedy must, then, be applied where the disease exists. The local churches must return to the right and New-Testament way of constituting and governing themselves.

"Furnish yourselves with [Ruling] Elders:" this, in the words of an ancient cry, is the most important advice which can at present be given to our churches. Every local church should have continuously in office the two classes of officers who are needed in order that the church may be fully organized. Without them, the organization may be a church; but it is an imperfect and a relatively impotent church. A number of its own members, judged fit both of the Lord and of men for this responsibility, should be selected by the church for its leadership. And even if the office is to be held for a fixed term of years, — which is without doubt, under existing circumstances, usually the best custom, — these selected officers should by prayer and consecration be set apart for their work. The presbyter-bishops should be men of age, experience, fit for teaching and leading in the church. And, when the so-called pastor comes from without, he should enter into this college of presbyter-bishops as *primus inter pares; first* only because he has received the special training needed to make him more apt than others to teach, but *first among equals* because he is associated with the entire college

of elders in the teaching, discipline, and leadership of the church. Both he and they are, of course, constantly responsible to the entire church, by whose choice, and in whose interests, they have been appointed.

Besides these presbyter-bishops, the local church congregationally constituted has only one other class of officers: these are the deacons, who should ordinarily be younger men, chosen to act especially as the ministers of the church in its care of the sick, unfortunate, and poor.

Of the objections which might be urged against the acceptance of this ancient word of advice, we are by no means ignorant. So far as the essential part of these objections is made against an obnoxious name (elders), or lies in the direction of a charge of presbyterianizing, we do not think them worthy of a specific reply. A word with respect to one objection placed upon grounds of practical difficulty must now suffice. It will be truly said, that great numbers of our churches have not the material out of which several presbyter-bishops may be made. And each local church must, indeed, submit to the limitations which are imposed upon its organization by circumstances beyond its control. The number of its members may be unavoidably few, their quality may be relatively poor; but in general, until it has material sufficient and suitable for its proper organization, it should refrain from organizing, and devote itself purely to evangelistic work. If it has been organized under more favorable previous circumstances, and has come to a low estate by incurring circumstances adverse, it may be best to abandon the effort to sustain itself as an independent particular church. Any body of Christians, on becoming — whether from youth, or

the decay of age, or disease — too feeble to maintain itself at all in condition of organization, should be taken under the fostering care of the communion of churches. But, when it is really too small and weak to supply itself with officers, it usually should relinquish its attempt, for the present, to be a particular visible church. If, however, due help is rendered, under the principle of the communion of churches, the extreme necessity will much more rarely arrive; and, besides all this, we are to think better and more hopefully of the so-called feeble churches. The actual practice of the office fits the incumbent for his office; and many men of crude understanding, small experience, and little courage, under exigencies develop into royal leaders of a Christian church.

The advantages of a collective eldership may be assumed to be, under our present somewhat trying circumstances, especially great. Some of these advantages have been only hinted at in this Course of Lectures; others, more fully discussed. The training of the individual Christian in leadership and of the entire church in self-discipline and united action; the bringing to bear, upon cases of difficulty and urgency, of the best judgment and largest charity of the church; the continuous leadership, under responsible persons, of the action of the entire community, as distinguished from successive periods of untried leadership under a new pastor, and no leadership when the pastor departs; the increased safeguard against unsound and impure ministers, if the established eldership of the church is made interested in and responsible for the person whom it receives to its membership whenever the church calls him to its pastorate; the possibility of a more compact and tangible place at which the communion of the

churches may lay hold of the local church; the comfort and help and added strength which the rightly-judging pastor derives from being associated in office with brethren whom he may especially trust, and upon whom he may safely rely; the increase of power in edifying and evangelizing, which might come through the more multiform expression of the Christian interest of the church in its own membership, and in the community at large, — these and yet other benefits to be derived from a right constitution of the local church will occur to every reader.

Let, then, every Congregational church be furnished with a College of Presbyter-bishops in order that it may be a completely-organized and efficient Christian church. Inasmuch as it would be a body corporate, furnished for independent activities, and organized for self-control, let it have the means and instrumentalities of such activities and self-control.

And when, to the power of its principles, the true Church Polity adds that power which comes from a wise and effective manifestation of those principles, especially in its method of propagating churches and of constituting the local church, then neither its advocates nor its opponents will have reason to complain of its slow progress, weakness in things practical, or inapplicability as a theory to all the sterner conditions of the Christian life.

PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH POLITY.

LECTURE I.

THE PRINCIPLES OF CONGREGATIONALISM.

THE scarcity of works which have aimed to treat Congregationalism in a thoroughly philosophical way, whether from the psychological point of view, or from that furnished by pragmatic history, is indeed remarkable. The spirit of the earlier treatises upon this subject — of those, that is, which were produced from the middle period of the seventeenth to the same period in the eighteenth century — is eminently philosophical. The writers of these treatises clearly recognized the great truth, that the idea of the church which they strove to realize is both scriptural and rational. How broad and profound are the normal principles, and how lofty, manly, and free the formative spirit, of our polity, no one can duly estimate who is not familiar with such writers. We may say of them, what one of them says of the order of their churches, — they "somewhat more than sip," they take "an honest, healthful draught, at nature's fountains."

These men could not, however, treat pragmatically the very history which they were engaged in making. The push of the motives before which they took anew

the Kingdom of Heaven by force was too persistent and mighty to admit of their analyzing these motives. In more recent times there have been produced a sufficient number of books which have given with fidelity and in detail the history of the New-England churches. Their genesis on foreign soil, in England and in Holland, their planting and unfolding on our own soil, have been carefully traced. Nor are we wanting in Manuals which bravely attempt, both for the benefit of the present and of the future, to deduce rules for the application of the principles of our church polity to the minutest occurrences of church life. Obsolete or obsolescent rules cannot, however, exhibit or enforce living principles. Crystals when already formed are useful for the cabinet; but the divine law and the divine force in crystallization are best apprehended and felt by study of the formative process. Neander tells us[1] that he solicited his "young friend" Uhden to give the details of the revivals of religion in North America, "both in a psychological view and in their relation to the history of the Christian life." It has thus come about that the first attempt at a philosophical history of our polity was born abroad: it sprung from the heart of a great German, and from the pen of his pupil, and was at birth swathed in a foreign language. The greatest and truly complete history of this polity still awaits a worthy parentage. May its birth be in the ancestral home, and its form have the familiar characteristics of its revered ancestors!

The successful study of Congregationalism, and, indeed, of every form of church polity, — whether for purposes of private knowledge or of public information; whether in the form of preparing brief essays upon

[1] The New-England Theocracy, Preface, p. vii, f.

special topics, or general surveys in courses of lectures, or the more elaborate production of the printed volume, — can pursue only one method. This method must be that which has been significantly but barbarously termed "the historico-genetic." The method, as the very name implies, is one especially adapted to a historic growth. All historic growths, when treated in a manner corresponding to their nature, are treated by the historico-genetic method: they are treated, that is, as growths in history. The settled conviction of modern thought and scholarship has come to be, that matters of this kind can only be understood when their process of development has been traced, its connections pointed out, and its principles analyzed. The process of development must be traced backward to the germinal ideas from which it sprung: it must also be traced forward from those ideas, along their various lines of movement, to the products in institutions, laws, and habits resulting from them. The connections of this process must be pointed out in order that its causes, its position, its meaning in the world-wide movements of history, may be indicated. Its principles must be analyzed in order that reason may be satisfied, in order that the enduring, because true, elements may be distinguished from those which will perish, either because they are essentially temporary or essentially false. In every inquiry, however, which concerns the Christian church, the Christian student who inquires according to the pattern of this method will obtain his answer in some form of the Shechinah. He will find the presence of the Eternal Spirit manifested everywhere. The ideas and principles which are traced in their development will appear to originate from the mind and heart of God: the connections which can be pointed out will be ascribed to the holy divine will.

The most superficial acquaintance with the theme of this Lectureship — a theme which gets itself recognized, if not expressed, under the happy general term of *Congregationalism* — must convince us that it especially demands the above-mentioned form of treatment; for New-England Congregationalism is, without doubt, a divine historic growth. Essentially considered, it is not merely a definite system of church government; it is not a creed; it is not a mere combination of both system and creed. Its laws, therefore, cannot be unfailingly determined from any book of discipline, or platform, or manual. It must be known in its germinal ideas, its vital principles, its broad and deep connections, its lofty and quickening spirit, if it is satisfactorily known at all.

Two prevalent questions concerning Congregationalism make apparent the pre-eminent need which this theme has of receiving treatment by application of the historico-genetic method. These two questions are apt to prove as disagreeable and startling as they are prevalent. The first of them is the very natural inquiry, What *is* Congregationalism? By its enemies this question is commonly asked with the wicked air of one maliciously perplexing his brother Christian; by its friends, with the amusing air of one hopelessly perplexed. And, after all, what really is Congregationalism? Thomas Hughes tells us of a gentleman who became deeply interested in the study of the English public schools. But, after much visitation and inquiry, this gentleman was still asking the question, "What, then, after all, *is* an English public school?" The articles of Mr. Hughes in "The Contemporary Review, although written in answer to the same question, leave the reader still in doubt. And so is our experience

likely to be with the definition of Congregationalism. If one is seeking a concrete and readily comprehensible answer to the question what it is, one will find only a partial and an unsatisfactory answer. The satisfactory answer to the question, I aver again, can come only in an intelligent recognition of the germinal ideas and fundamental principles of this great movement in modern history. Congregationalism is not to be defined as the system of doctrines which John Calvin promulgated, or the system of church government instituted by John Robinson; neither is it a mere fusion or blending of the two.

Another equally prevalent and disagreeable question, which needs for its answer the application of the above method, may be proposed in the following form: What will Congregationalism turn out to be? What may we hope to make by development of our polity? What must we fear from steps in the development which we cannot control? How much, and in what respects, may we change the form? Is this or that particular change consistent with the principles of a true church polity, or not? is it of the nature of a legitimate outgrowth from those principles, or of an excrescence, which, if it become also an accretion, will endanger the very life of the principles themselves? The right answer to this second question, in whatever form of the above series proposed, can be reached only by the right method of research. A survey of the germinal ideas and organific principles of this historic growth, and the study of the process of their unfolding, will alone show us what changes are permissible, what not, what elements are accidental, and what necessary. Without a knowledge of these principles thus gained, we run a twofold risk, — we may let our church order languish by refusing to

cultivate its legitimate growth, or we may cut off its very roots in our ardor for cultivating it.

It will be, then, the purpose of this Course of Lectures to contribute somewhat to the treatment of its theme after the true method. This contribution can be only a very insignificant one. Let it, however, be in genuine coin, although the sum here gathered from the treasuries of the Scriptures, history, and the human soul, aggregate only a small amount.

Our plan will lead us briefly to analyze the true Church Polity, especially as it is illustrated in the history of modern Congregationalism, into its constituent principles, and afterward to apply these principles to certain questions which are likely to become burning questions of the future, even if they are not under a smouldering fire at the present day. The application shall be made in three main divisions, according as the principles stand related: first, to our common manhood; second, to our common faith; third, to the growth of the kingdom of God on earth. The method which will be steadfastly followed has already been sufficiently defined. Should it in the lecture-room appear at times to degenerate into the merely dogmatic or speculative method, let it be remembered that the appearance is to some extent a necessity of the place. The method in the study of the lecturer has never been dogmatic or speculative: it has been the method of analysis applied to an organic and still vital product in the history of the Christian Church.

The historico-genetic study of Congregationalism enables us to distinguish two primary and fundamental principles which have given character to its germination and to all its growth. It also enables us to distinguish the various combinations which these two

primary principles have made, and which have shaped in modern history the constitution, doctrine, worship, and discipline of Christian churches. Of such combinations of the primary principles we can distinguish at least seven, and to them we will give the name of secondary or derived principles. The name must not be understood as signifying that any of these so-called secondary principles are unessential to the complete idea and correct practice of a true church polity: on the contrary, they are all essential to both idea and practice. They are called secondary principles because they may be seen to have their existence and outgrowth from the two primary truths.

Of these primary principles one may be called the formal, the other the material, principle of Congregationalism. The formal principle is called such because it has always been recognized as the divine truth, which, being consciously held as distinctive by Congregationalists, has actually given the form to their peculiar church life. The formal principle of any historic growth is that which contains the norm of that growth, and which therefore gives to the growth the special characteristics that it unfolds. The material principle, on the other hand, is the one truth which best expresses the sum total of those special characteristics. It describes the substance of the truth which has been reached under the impulse and guidance of the formal principle. If, then, we can discover that great truth upon which those who have given form to our order have had their eyes steadfastly fixed as they have shaped this order, we shall know the formal principle of Congregationalism. What principle, consciously accepted, gave to their promulgators the laws which they accepted and advocated? What truth from heaven

entered their minds, so that, recognizing it as formative truth, they wrought designedly after its pattern in shaping all the truths of church polity which are embodied in our church order?

The answer to these questions is not at all obscure or difficult. We state the formal principle of Congregationalism in the following terms: *The word of God in the Scriptures is designed to furnish, and actually does furnish, the sole objective authority, not only for the doctrines, but also for the constitution, worship, and discipline, of the Christian Church.*

But the question at once occurs, Was not this the avowed principle of the Reformation under Luther? and does it not belong alike to all Protestant churches? How, then, can it be called the distinctive formal principle of Congregationalism? It seems, indeed, both surprising and amusing to find how fond the orthodox Lutheran theologians have been of claiming that the consistent tenure of this principle has since the Reformation belonged to Lutheranism alone. "What in all places moved and impelled a Luther," says Guerike,[1] "what grounded the Reformation, and defined it in its course, what stands at the head of its confessions, and lies at the foundation of all its discussions, is the word of God, and nothing but that; and the word of God, the word of God alone, appears clearly as the formal doctrinal principle of the Lutheran Church." In what respects this principle is distinctive of Congregationalism, and, more definitely, what, so far as distinctive, this principle is, we shall consider in another Lecture. For indicating the nature of the grounds upon which we claim the full and consistent avowal and application of

[1] See Zeitschrift für Lutherische Theologie und Kirche, 1840, erstes quartelheft, p. 61.

this great principle as peculiar to our church order, the few following remarks will suffice.

The Reformation under Luther did, indeed, avow the larger and more important half of this great formal principle; but the lesser half of the principle no other churches than the Congregational have clearly avowed. And no other churches have made a consistent attempt fairly and thoroughly to carry out the entire principle. For let it be considered that the principle has reference not only to doctrine, but also to the constitution, worship, and discipline of the Christian Church. This latter half of the reference many other forms of church order somehow manage to escape. Some of these forms make their escape by such ill logic, such twisting of exegesis, and juggling with history, as leads them to the stronghold of a divinely ordered hierarchical system. They conclude that Christ's spirit in the New Testament, in the apostolic constitution, and in the history of the Church, commands, or at least authoritatively commends, their peculiar form of the hierarchy. Others escape by indifference and good nature to the smooth but barren fields of expediency. They conclude that the Scriptures do not furnish us, either in their statement of principles, or in the facts of their history, any obligatory form of constituting and managing Christ's churches. If a certain form works well, gives numbers, *éclat*, success, this is its sufficient authority and recommendation for use. But a true and well-principled church polity begins with the avowed belief, that, in gifts of principles and facts of early history, the spirit of Christ in the Scriptures has described, within certain limits, the true constitution, worship, and discipline of his churches. Moreover, most other forms of church order have actually failed consistently to carry out even

so much of this principle as they have avowed. Their very manner of constitution and control does *not* permit a free and open appeal to the Word of God alone, as giving authoritatively even its doctrines to the Christian Church. The Reformation of Luther carried the principle half way, then stuck, and then retreated from its most advanced position. The Christian men in England to whose researches in the New Testament, and to whose sufferings in behalf of its truth, our church order is due, did not stick at carrying the principle straight through both the doctrine and the polity of the Church.

No one who reads history aright can doubt that early Congregationalism in England and in this country began and continued as an appeal to the New Testament for light upon the right form of church life. Luther had said, I bring all alleged doctrine to this light, and I find that justification by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the great truth from which the Church has departed, and which I must again avow. "Here I stand: I can do no otherwise. God help me. Amen."[1] Our fathers said, "We, too, bring, not only all alleged right doctrine, but all constituted forms of church life and practice, to the same light. We find that the Scriptures teach this. A true Christian church is a company of true believers, bound together by a covenant, under the leadership of Jesus Christ, constituted for self-control, and obligated by the law of love to commune as much as they have power with all who are Christ's. This, too, is a great truth from which the Church has departed, and which we must avow. Here we stand. God help us. We can do no otherwise."

[1] So tradition and the monument at Worms have the words; but for a curious discussion of their authenticity, see an article in Studien und Kritiken, 1869.

To quote express declarations of this formal principle of our church order is not necessary to prove it true, or distinctive of this order. The view just presented scarcely has any fairly disputable features; but those features will, as I have already said, be more minutely described at another time. Those who rediscovered the true church polity after it had lain quite buried under a great load of ritualism and ecclesiasticism assert that their own sole chart and guide-book is the New Testament. "The sole measure of evangelical truth," says John Owen,[1] "is His word of whom it is said, *'Ο λόγος ὁ σος ἀλήθειά ἐστιν.*" The same author entitled one of his treatises, "The Word of God the sole rule of worship." "We give ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ and to the word of his grace for the teaching, ruling, and sanctifying us in matters of worship and conversation;" "We bind ourselves, in the presence of God, to walk together in all his ways, according as he is pleased to reveal himself unto us in his blessed word of truth,"—such are the avowals which Higginson introduced into the covenant of the Salem church, modelling it after that of the church at Plymouth. It was the scriptural argument which convinced that "reverend and learned divine, Mr. John Cotton," of the truth of the Congregational way; and it was the same Cotton, who, in a little book the margins of which are black with citations from the New Testament, demonstrated that the government of the church is "spirituall and heavenly, as being administered, not according to the precepts of men, but Christ's commandments; not by earthly weapons, but by the Word."[2] It was the oral

[1] Of Schism, Edinburgh edition of 1852, vol. xiii. p. 99.

[2] The Doctrine of the Church, to which is committed the Keys of the Kingdome of Heaven, third edition, London, 1644, p. 10.

and "manuscript arguments" of Cotton which went far toward convincing Thomas Goodwin and John Davenport. It was Goodwin who proposed in the Westminster Assembly, that, before fixing upon the church government "most agreeable to God's holy word," the question should be decided, whether the Scriptures contain a rule for the constitution and government of churches. It was he, also, who most skilfully and persistently held up before that assembly the scriptural plan of governing churches.[1] It was Davenport who declared that in the New Testament "we finde the grand Charter it self and the ancient Presidents (precedents) of the first Christian churches planted by the apostles."[2] It was he, also, who came to New England determined "to drive things . . . as near to the precept and pattern of Scripture as they could be driven." And John Robinson, who had studied under the same master with John Cotton, in his notable Farewell, speaks of the "pure Testamente of Christ, to be propounded and followed as ye only rule and pattern for direction herein to all churches and Christians."[3]

Nor did the men of following generations fail to understand the principle upon which these earlier men were determinately working. The whole consciousness and very breath of our body politic has been infused with the aromatic vitality of this principle. "They were in the sentiments," says Prince,[4] in giving a summary

[1] Article of Dr. Leonard Bacon, in New-Englander for November, 1878.

[2] Power of Congregational Churches asserted and vindicated, London, 1672, p. 2.

[3] See Bradford's History of Plymouth Plantation, p. 59, note, and Mass. Hist. Coll., series 3d, vol. ix. p. 70, as to this so-called Farewell Discourse of Robinson.

[4] New England Chronology, Boston, 1826, p. 176.

of the main principles of Robinson and his church, "that the inspired Scriptures only contain the true religion, and especially nothing is to be accounted the Protestant religion, respecting either faith or worship, but what is taught in them." So Cotton Mather understood his ancestors when he describes them as having "agreed little further than in this general principle, that the Reformation of the church was to be endeavored according to the written Word of God."[1] The platforms erected by the early synods, even after receiving a patch or a curtain in front at the hands of many lesser and later councils and conventions (as was the case, for instance, not long since, through the notable Vermont resolution), are neither obscure nor timid in laying down this formal principle. "The parts of church government," says the Cambridge Platform,[2] "are all of them exactly described in the word of God." . . . "So that it is not left in the power of men, officers, churches, or any state in the world, to add, or diminish, or alter any thing in the least measure therein." And the Saybrook Confession of Faith in bold and masterful language declares, "The Supreme Judge, by whom all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Scripture delivered by the Spirit, into which Scripture so delivered our faith is finally resolved."[3] That our entire polity was rediscovered and shaped in self-conscious adherence to this formal principle, all the later writers expressly recognize, in forms varying from the brief and somewhat incomplete

[1] Magnalia, I, iv, § 6.
[2] Chap. I. 3. [3] Chap. I. sect. x.

statement of Punchard to the exceedingly elaborate one proposed by Dr. Dexter.[1]

Leaving, for the present, the discussion of the formal principle, let us pass on to inquire, What is the material principle of Congregationalism? In its discovery and statement we have little help from either our denominational literature, or our hereditary consciousness. The workmen upon the building of our church order have known the master architect, to whose word of command they kept always an attentive ear: they have not always known the one great idea according to which they were erecting the building. The material principle must, then, be discovered by inspection of the building rather than by testimony from the self-conscious workmen. There is, indeed, one great doctrine of Christianity which has received through the growth of Congregationalism a distinctive development. This development and the corresponding application of the doctrine are distinctively Congregational. The one great truth which gives the basis, and expresses the sum total, of our distinctive views of Christian truths, is our doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The material principle of Congregationalism may be stated in the following terms: —

The immediateness and fulness of that relation which exists between the Spirit of Christ and the Church of Christ extends to every congregation of true Christians and to the soul of every individual true believer.

"It is a scriptural principle recognized by Congregationalists," says a recent writer, while stating in half-way fashion this fundamental material principle of a true church polity, "that every believer has received a

[1] Congregationalism, p. 2. A theory of exegesis and a partial statement of the material principle of Congregationalism are, however, blended with this statement.

gift of the Holy Ghost; and that gifts of teaching and exhortation are distributed, not to the clergy exclusively, but to many others also."[1] The principle is much broader than this statement: it has been always tacitly assumed amongst us, rarely expressed with distinctness, and almost never with recognition of that important position which it really holds. The study which we bestow upon the springs of being, the vital parts, the quickening influences of this great development of doctrine, will alone avail to make clear the justness of our claim. Congregationalism has built into its very being, built in by vital processes of nutrition and growth, as food is built into the fabric of muscle and bone, a special development of the great New-Testament doctrine of the Holy Spirit, as the illuminer, guide, and ruler of redeemed souls. Concerning the nature of this material principle we notice at present only the following particulars: —

First, this material principle has constantly accompanied and modified the formal principle. The true church polity resorts to the Bible to find there, respecting both doctrine and church order, the revelation of the Spirit of Christ. In this resort Congregationalists claim to have with them what they gladly concede every Christian may obtain, viz., the revelation of the same Spirit in their spirits.

Again: this principle, called material, must unite with the formal principle in order to derive from them both each one of those secondary principles, which in their totality distinguish the true church polity. The spirituality of the Church of Jesus Christ, in its faith, institution, laws, and administration, was a fundamental truth unswervingly maintained by the early Congrega-

[1] Article of Dr. Noyes, in New-Englander, July, 1879, p. 522.

tionalists. Whenever likely to depart from this principle, we should recall the words of Robinson:[1] "As the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, but spiritual, and he a spiritual king, so must the government of this spiritual kingdom under this spiritual king needs be spiritual, and all the laws of it."

Moreover, this material principle belongs to the most advanced order of Christian doctrine: it has to do with the divine self-revelation in the Holy Spirit. Its practical outcome can be fully manifested only at the latest stages in the unfolding of the kingdom of heaven on earth. All the great religious questions are becoming more and more questions of the Spirit. Science, philosophy, and theology are to unite upon a true and comprehensive doctrine of God as the Eternal and Absolute Spirit. The coming age, in its chief characteristics, is the age of the Spirit.

And, finally, this material principle of Congregationalism is destined surely to win its way to due recognition among all classes of Christians. This principle, let it be said reverently, democratizes the activities and alliances of the Holy Ghost. The aristocratic view of the doctrine of the Spirit has hitherto practically been prevalent. But the future belongs to the other view as surely as the promise shall be fulfilled, "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh." We believe in the final triumph of these principles of a true church polity, because that polity has been twice born, — born once in the apostolic age, a second time in the age of the Reformation in England, but born both times of the Holy Ghost. Of its parentage at this

[1] Justification of Separation from the Church of England. See also Uhden's New-England Theocracy, p. 43, ff., and Backus's History of New England, vol. I. p. 25, f.

second appearing, we can say with President Oakes, "The Lord," that is, the Spirit of Christ in them and in their circumstances, "did more for them than for any people in the world."[1]

The history of Congregationalism shows us its formal and material principles as combined and active in these seven secondary or derived principles.

Of the seven we mention first the principle of Christ's exclusive rulership. Our fathers believed that hierarchical systems, enforced conformity to creeds and forms of worship, and subservience to human authorities and titles, are derogatory to the kingship of Christ. It was part of their desire to re-establish King Immanuel on the throne of the visible church. Kings who usurped authority over his churches, and clergy who set themselves up as priests and lords, had drawn a curtain before the throne-room of this king. But said Robinson, "Christ is as absolute and entire a king as he is a priest; and his people must be as careful to preserve the dignity of the one as to enjoy the benefits of the other."[2] "This was and is," said John Higginson of Salem, "our cause in coming here, that Christ alone might be acknowledged by us as the only Head, Lord, and Lawgiver." Thomas Hooker[3] defines the purpose of the early Congregationalists as follows: "As the *prophetical* and *priestly* office of Christ was completely vindicated in the first times of reformation, so now the great cause and work of God's reforming people is to clear the rights of Christ's *kingly* office, and in their practice to set up his kingdom." The complete and consistent application of this principle, which

[1] See Vindication of the Government of New-England Churches, by John Wise, Boston, 1772, p. 19.

[2] Justification of Separation from the Church of England.

[3] Preface to Survey of Church Discipline.

refers every thing of authority in the constitution and practice of the Church to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, may be seen in Davenport's compact and masterly deduction of the doctrine of the Church from Matt. xvi. 18. "Upon this rock I will build my church," says our Lord: "therefore," concludes Davenport, "(1) Christ as Lord and Head is the efficient cause of the Church; (2) Christ as believed on and confessed is the material cause of the Church; and (3) The covenanting of the Church with Christ and one another is its formal cause."[1] This principle of the sole rulership of Jesus Christ in all things concerning his Church follows necessarily and immediately from the blending of the formal and material principles. The Bible and the witness of the Christian consciousness unite in testifying that Jesus was and is the king of redeemed souls, the ruler of the redeemed people. Both Old and New Testaments proclaim that he was a king, and promise that he shall in the future be more completely the king. The Spirit in the heart of the believer knows the Lord of the believer as now being indeed a king.[2] It is our material principle which evinces and enforces the duty of every Christian to bow before the rulership of Christ, the duty, also, to acknowledge no other ruler than Christ.

For the principle of individual equality and self-control is another principle of a true church polity. This is the reverse of the principle of Christ's exclusive rulership. It is also necessarily and immediately de-

[1] The Power of Congregational Churches, pp. 3, ff.

[2] Professor E. A. Lawrence, in an address before the General Association of Connecticut, in commemoration of its one hundred and fiftieth anniversary, instances first among the three great principles of Congregationalism, this one: Christ the sole legislator in the Church. See Contributions to the Ecclesiastical History of Connecticut, p. 74.

rived from a combination of the formal and material principles. It is, indeed, difficult to state the truth of this principle in any unexceptionable form as a logical proposition. A certain doctrine and spirit of Christian individualism is, however, an unmistakable characteristic of our polity. The roots of this principle of a just individualism lie deep down and far back. They are as far back in the Bible as the primitive utterance in which God says, "Let us make man in our image;" or the covenant of Mosaism, which gives to each of the followers of Jehovah the title of priest and king. They are as far back in human consciousness as the time when the first human soul recognized itself as a free and responsible spirit standing over against the Eternal Spirit. They are as deep down in the Bible as the truth that God does not regard the countenance of man, but requires of every man his heart, and a worship which is in the spirit and in truth. They are as deep down in consciousness as that recognition of one's own spiritual worth which is necessary to ask intelligently the question, What shall a man give or take in exchange for the soul? This principle is, however, as far as possible from a declaration of contemptuous disregard of influence, or even authority (if you will use the word in its modified meaning), within the church of Christ. The Lord's bondman is no man's bondman, though he should be servant of all. Every Christian, however unlearned and weak, stands in essentially the same relations with every other, however wise and strong. With respect to sin he is a freedman; with respect to his fellows he is a freeman; with respect to his Lord, he is a slave. Nor does personal dignity, nor official position, nor experience in the gospel, nor even the apostolic calling, essentially change these relations. Congregationalism always stands ready

to remind its great men, in the words of Latimer, "The apostles preached . . . and lorded not." It does not permit that it shall be said of its own ministers, "And now they lord, and preach not." New-England Congregationalism has no doubt at times developed an excess of bad individualism; but to permit and foster a large amount of what Dr. J. P. Thompson called "sanctified individualism" is an essential principle of the true church polity. And as this principle is bound down on the one side by the principle of Christ's exclusive rulership, so is it bound down on the other side by another principle of Congregationalism.

The third principle is that of a regenerate membership. The right use of the second of these derived principles is conditioned upon the right use of the first and third. These two serve either as wings or as weights for the principle of individual equality and self-control, according as men are inclined to make use of it. To a "sanctified individualism" the human soul may rise upon the truth, Christ is my only Lord, and I call no man master: from the cold heights of an unholy individualism the same soul may be kept down by the truth, to obey my Master is to act with others as fellow-servant. Regeneration of the soul secures obedience to Christ: obedience to Christ alone secures spiritual freedom. That the founders of Congregationalism, both in England and in this country, regarded this third principle as an essential element of the true doctrine and right institution of the Christian Church, I need not stay to prove. Their earnest study of the New Testament had, as Dr. Noyes says,[1] "put them in possession of their beautiful secret, — the true conception of the kingdom of heaven on earth." Possessing the secret of this

[1] New-Englander, July, 1879, p. 516.

great conception, the divine law for the constitution of the Christian Church could not remain to them a secret. Churches, in order to conform to this conception, must adopt the law which prevailed when the Lord added daily to the apostolic churches, but only of such as were already in process of salvation. The right to keep the local church pure, they concluded, resides in each local church. But this right of discipline cannot be duly exercised, except upon the principle of a regenerate membership. The wrong of communing in the most holy sacramental acts with those, who, neither in faith nor in conduct, claimed the spiritual communion upon which the sacraments take place, could be amended only by the application of this same principle. "The people are the church," said Robinson,[1] "and to make a reformed church there must first be a reformed people." It is only by the grace of God in their hearts, he goes on to maintain, that the people, "being first fitted for and made capable of the sacraments and other ordinances, might afterwards have communicated in the pure use of them." "Christ believed on and confessed is," in the judgment of them all, and according to the words of Davenport,[2] "the rock whereupon a particular visible church is built." It was, therefore, as a fundamental doctrine, almost without a single exception even so much as questioned by our early authorities, that the Cambridge Platform laid down its definitions. A Congregational church must consist of a "company of saints by calling:"[3] repentance, faith, and obedience are requisites of those "by the Holy Ghost called saints and faithful brethren."[4] This principle Uhden declares[5] to

[1] Justification of Separation from the Church of England.
[2] Power of Congregational Churches, p. 9.
[3] Chap. II. 6. [4] Chap. III. 2. [5] New-England Theocracy, p. 68.

be one of the two great distinguishing principles of Congregationalism. To define it more accurately in both its positive and negative form, to show its connection with our two primary principles, to trace its history, and suggest some of its applications, will occupy us in the Sixth Lecture of this Course.

Closely connected with the foregoing secondary principles, and like them including in itself elements from both the formal and the material principle, is the one which we have placed fourth. It directly concerns, and gives fundamental laws and inseparable practices to, the true church polity. This is the principle of the autonomy of the local church. That "the several churches are altogether independent of one another," Uhden states[1] to be the other of the two fundamental principles of the church order of the Puritans. The statement is inaccurately expressed. The terms "independent" and "independency" may, perhaps, on account of the prejudice and opprobrium which they have excited, be comfortably and safely discarded. The suggestion for the application of the term "autonomy" to the condition of the local Congregational church is, so far as I am aware, first found with Davenport.[2] It is based upon the analogy which exists between "the spiritual power of a Congregational church of Christ and the civil power of the most free and perfect cities." This power includes the "three privileges; viz., to use, 1. Their own laws; 2. Magistrates; 3. Judgments." To every city having these powers Thucydides gives the title *αὐτόνομος*, or *αὐτοτελής*. Perhaps no better definition of the autonomy of the local church can be given than the one proposed nearly two centuries ago by Rev. John Wise:[3] "A gos-

[1] New-England Theocracy, p. 68.
[2] Power of Congregational Churches, p. 123. [3] Vindication, p. 49.

pel church essentially considered as a body incorporated is the subject of all church power." The exact theoretical statement and practical adjustment of this principle have always been disputed by two parties in Congregationalism. To discover in the past history of our order the same heated debate, the same arguments, the same alarms, the same recriminations, with which present experience familiarizes us, is either discouraging or refreshing, according to one's point of view. As to the power of Christian congregations to govern themselves, Congregationalism has always had a large confidence. It would be hard indeed, to prove by any comparative detriment which has resulted from the use of this power, that the confidence should be a diminishing one. To the people under the God of righteousness, our civil government commits itself. To the same people, redeemed and inspired by Christ, our church government also commits itself. In the civil state the people have the light of reason for their control. In the church state the third principle provides that such as are "adorned with a double set of ennobling immunities — the first from nature, the other from grace" — shall enter into religious partnership. Must these men, racily asks the pastor of Ipswich, "when they enter into charter-party to manage a trade for heaven, *ipso facto* be clapped under a government that is arbitrary and despotic?" [1]

In close and almost integrating relation with the principle of the autonomy of the local church stands the fifth principle; namely, that of the communion of churches. How far this principle should limit the former is still a question for fair discussion. It has also been a question most acrimoniously discussed. How the adjustment of the two principles actually has been

[1] Wise's Vindication, p. 42.

made in the past is a question simply for candid historical research. The truth of history will be found to be, that both principles have been variously enunciated, both frequently and sometimes flagrantly violated, and yet both steadfastly asserted, by the advocates of the two conflicting views. This fact may seem discouraging to the inquirer who would know by which of the two he shall hold most firmly, especially discouraging to him who would know how with equal firmness he may hold by both. If, however, one is proposing to dispense with the consideration of all seemingly conflicting principles, one must escape from the present universe of truth; if one is proposing to refuse the adjustment of such principles in practice, one must escape from the present sphere of conduct.

Upon no point of argument or of practice did our Congregational ancestry bestow more pains than upon the one of proving that they were not schismatic, or separatist (properly so-called), or unnaturally egoistical in their relations with other Christians. From such birth-pains issued the work of John Owen, entitled "Of Schism," with its elaborate arguments and its following kindred treatises." "Wee bynd ourselves," reads the covenant drawn up by Higginson for the first church organized in New England, "to studdy the advancement of the Gospell in all truth and peace, both in regard of those that are within, or without, noe way sleighting our sister Churches, but useing theire Counsell as need shalbe."[1] The fresh, sweet picture which the New Testament paints of the communion of apostolic churches, the obligations of fraternal charity, which cut to the root, as they do, every manifestation of isolating

[1] See copy of the records of the First Church of Salem, in Mr. White's New-England Congregationalism, p. 14.

pride or ill-principled caprice, commit the formal principle of Congregationalisn to the communion of churches. The very nature of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and the primal effect of the habits of acting and thinking which are formed under the influence of this doctrine, commit to the same cause our material principle. However difficult we may find the detailed adjustment of the communion of churches to the autonomy of the local church, the true church polity will never, in theory or in practice, omit to consider either one of the two. The power of Christian brotherly love in defining both theory and practice we shall hope to feel, not unfrequently, in this Course of Lectures.

We mention as the sixth principle of the true church polity the following, — the principle of conserving the results of common experience. We might, perhaps, call this the common-law principle. It is not, indeed, distinctly recognized by those who have made an analysis of the necessary elements of Congregationalism; but it is, nevertheless, one of such necessary elements. Even the most careful and thorough application of the formal principle cannot give us all we need to know for the right application of the germinal ideas and vital principles of church polity. We need rules; and the Bible gives few rules. Nor can we get these rules by immediate personal inspiration. They do not come steadily and clearly to view in the flashes of the "inner light." Congregationalism was in early days careful to separate itself from all Quakers, Anabaptists, and fanatics of every sort. Its instruments of separation were not always of the most delicate pattern: its use of the instruments which it had at command cannot always be commended. But the obscure recognition of this sixth principle accounts, in part, for the act of separation.

Our fathers believed in candid research of the Bible for new light: they believed, also, in the indwelling of that light "which lighteth every man coming into the world," and which is a perennial fountain of light for the true believer. But they believed in common sense as well; and common sense is aggregated and inherited and habituated experience. It is, then, a common-sense principle, this one of conserving the judgments, and, in general, the experience, of the past of our churches, and of not departing from the practices based upon this experience, without both a rational, and, if possible, also an experimental ground of departure. What the other denominations accomplish by written statutes, canons, decrees, bulls, books of discipline and direction, we attempt by common law. New theories must be tested before adopted, new practices proved before wholly approved. The old way is not always the best; but the old is safer until you have a better way. Orthodoxy in faith or in polity is not infallible; but neither is its opposite. And orthodoxy has the presumption in its favor. "We do earnestly testify," say John Higginson and William Hubbard in their joint "Testimony,"[1] "that, if any who are given to change do rise up to unhinge the well established churches in this land, it will be the duty and interest of the churches, to"—one might suppose some dreadful sentence, like that of decapitation, or at least excommunication, were about to be recommended; but no!—"to examine whether the men of this trespass are more prayerful, more watchful, more zealous, more patient, more heavenly, more universally conscientious, and harder students, and better scholars, and more willing to be informed and advised, than those great and good men

[1] See Wise's Vindication, p. 69.

who left unto the churches what they now enjoy." Surely these terms are made sufficiently hard for the admission of innovators. That same author, who so sturdily and sarcastically defended the liberties of the churches, Rev. John Wise, declares that to plan to upset the existing order is to presume "that you have fairly monopolized all the reason of human nature," is, indeed, to "assume a prerogative of trampling under foot the natural original equality and liberty of your fellows."[1]

Over against the common-law principle of the true church polity we place in balance another, which is, the principle of progress through individual inquiry. The motto of this principle is as old as the writing of Cyprian: *Consuetudo sine veritate est vetustas erroris.* Congregationalism is pre-eminently a product of the Reformation way of holding the balance between private judgment and common sense. It cannot remember its own history, and also refuse to grant a large freedom to the individual in the discovery and promulgation of religious truth. It is matter of fact, and of essential truth as well, that, as Prince declares,[2] Robinson and his people "renounced all attachment to any mere human systems or expositions of the Scripture, and reserved an entire and perpetual liberty of searching the inspired records, and of forming both their principles and practice from those discoveries they should make therein, without imposing them on others." The same author also declares, that one of their main principles was this, "that every man has a right of judging for himself, of trying doctrines by the Scriptures, and of worshipping according to his apprehension of the

[1] This point of view is taken throughout his treatise, The Church's Quarrel Espoused.

[2] New-England Chronology, p. 175.

meaning of them."[1] This principle he fitly calls "the right of human nature," "the very basis of the Reformation, and, indeed, of all sincere religion." We have the memory of Gov. Winslow as guaranty for the fact that the Leyden pastor considered it "a misery much to be lamented," when Lutherans and Calvinists had "come to a period in religion," and were sticking where their rabbis had left them, refusing "to go further than the instruments of their reformation." This sacred principle of reasonable progress is averred also by the "Elders of the churches in New England," in their answer to the "Letter of Many Ministers in Old England." In the opinion of these elders, churches have continuous need "to grow from apparent defects to purity, and from reformation to reformation, age after age." And when they add, "especially touching the ordering of his house and worship," they do not exclude growth and reformation in doctrine also.[2] The men of the same spirit in Old England themselves held the same view. "A second principle," says the famous "Apologetical Narration," which is due chiefly to Dr. Thomas Goodwin, "a second principle we carried along with us in all our resolutions was not to make our present judgment and practice a binding law unto ourselves for the future, which we . . . made continual profession of upon all occasions."[3] "Be you never so peremptory in your opinions," says Baxter,[4] "you cannot resolve to hold them to the end; for light is powerful, and may change you, whether you will or no." It was in the consciousness of this conviction, as common to all Con-

[1] New-England Chronology, p. 177.

[2] See Felt's Ecclesiastical History of New England, vol. 1, p. 277, f.; and Dr. Leonard Bacon's article in New-Englander, July, 1878.

[3] See Hetherington's History of the Westminster Assembly, p. 160.

[4] Works, vol. 1, p. 42.

gregationalists, that Sir Richard Saltonstall wrote his letter to Cotton and Wilson, gently reproaching them for "New England's Persecutions" of the Anabaptists. It was in the consciousness of the same conviction that Cotton meekly replied, "We are far from arrogating infallibility of judgment to ourselves, or affecting uniformity: uniformity God never required, infallibility he never granted us."[1] The hope of improvement and the right of private judgment combine to produce the principle of progress through freedom of individual inquiry. This is distinctively a principle of Congregationalism.

We find, then, two fundamental principles of the true Church Polity, and, resulting from the combination of these in ways to be pointed out more distinctly hereafter, seven other principles, to which has been given the name of secondary, or derived. Certain specific applications or developments of these principles will occupy us in the subsequent Lectures of this Course. We close this consideration of the principles themselves with the following remarks, applicable to the analysis just completed.

The relations which the seven derived principles have been made to sustain to the two primary and to one another are not merely speculative, much less are they the result of capricious and whimsical analysis. All the principles of the true church polity do really flow from the fountain of one grand idea, — the idea of the communion of God with the soul of man. This divine communion through the book gives us the formal principle: the same communion through the indwelling spirit gives us the material principle. The spirit in the book and the spirit in the soul is one spirit. More-

[1] See Uhden's New-England Theocracy, p. 115, f.

over, all the secondary principles are most intimately related to one another, as furnishing each other with supplementary truths and with a system of counter considerations, checks, and limits, in the practice of these principles. The common-law principle limits the principle of change through individual inquiry; and the latter reciprocally limits the former. The principle of the autonomy of the local church is held in check by the principle of the communion of churches: the latter can by no means over-ride the territory of the former. The principle of individual self-control cannot degenerate into egoism or anarchy, because whipped back into its place within the team by the twofold chord of its adjacent principles. Three of these seven principles tend to liberty, spontaneity, and wealth of individual life; three others, to consolidation, order, and a certain conformity of common life. One principle, that of a regenerate membership, tends both ways: it links together, by the strong silken tie of communion with God and with man in love, the three sister principles which stand on either side. It was a somewhat obscure feeling of the obligation and expediency of balancing seemingly opposite principles, which led Thomas Goodwin, and the other authors of the "Apologetical Narration," to style Congregationalism the "Middle Way." But there is no obscurity in the words of John Wise, (and, indeed, who ever discovered aught obscure or timid in his writings?) when he declares of our polity, "It has the best balance belonging to it of any church government in the world. Other governments have generally too high a top, and are very lopsided too." The best of them, he declares, "plainly hangs over several degrees from a true perpendicular, towards Babylon; and if it falls, it buries you." "But here's a

government so exactly poised, that it keeps its motions regular, like the stupendous spheres, unless some *Phaeton* chance to mount the chariot-box, and becomes the driver." [1]

And yet, let us confess it, under the undue pressure or attraction of some one principle, and under the forces of human ignorance and selfishness, our church government has often leaned over several degrees, in various directions, and not unfrequently "towards Babylon." The primary principles of Congregationalism have, indeed, never been abrogated or permanently deteriorated by its adherents. They have, however, often been temporarily obscured. And there is not one of the derived principles which has not been either weakened, or virtually, for the time being, annulled, by numerous individuals, and even by considerable sections of Congregational churches. Noble John Robinson was not wholly self-consistent as to the power of church officers.[2] The somewhat too obstreperous General Court of Boston not unfrequently contradicted in practice its own most solemn dicta. Numbers of the churches, in accepting the half-way covenant, abrogated one of our most essential principles; and synods of Congregational churches not only approved, but even strove to enforce, the abrogation. The Saybrook Platform was the theoretical, if not the virtual, abrogation of another principle.

And finally, we still enjoy, or tolerate, conflicting views of the right proportions in which different elements should combine to form the organism of our body corporate. We might almost describe ourselves at present in the language used in 1676 to describe to the Lords of Trade and Plantation the ecclesiastical character of Connecticut: "Our people are some of

[1] Vindication, p. 57. [2] See Dr. Dexter's Congregationalism, p. 126.

them strict Congregational men; others, more large Congregational men; and some, moderate Presbyterians."[1] Our fathers have indeed left to us a rich treasure of principles; but they had not themselves completely adjusted in all their applications the division of this inheritance. If, however, we are to find our way forth from any mazes of difficulty in which we may be wandering, it must be with our hands firmly grasping the clew of the same principles. For our polity is a matter of principles, and therefore a thing of life: being a matter of principles and a thing of life, it is also a subject of growth. The growing life must adapt itself to, and be modified by, the environments: it must also itself assimilate and modify the environments. That which makes it *sui generis* a true church polity cannot be modified: all else may be. Indeed, when we observe how changes carry the day in all matters of human thought and practical activities, we are ready to say, "All else except the fundamental and characteristic principles *will* be changed."

In the difficulties which encompass the detailed application of these principles, we can determine truth, and decide conduct, only by a thorough knowledge of the principles involved. If the earthly rabbis disagree, we shall know which to follow, only by knowing in following which we shall come closest to the example of the New Testament and to the spirit of Christ. Only as the heavenly Rabbi teaches us by the word "objective" and the word "subjective," by the revelation historic and the revelation in sanctified reason, shall we attain the truth. The essential and permanent truths of our polity are as definite as the truth thus attained: they can be no more definite. He who wants to march in

[1] See Contributions to the Ecclesiastical History of Connecticut, p. 26.

Zion's battle-array, clad in a ponderous suit of unyielding mediæval armor, will probably resort to other divisions of the grand army.

But if any young man who now hears my voice shall attain the high degree of a Congregational pastor, and shall have before him any perplexing question which calls for definite theory or action, I venture this prediction: With ordinary good sense, with fairly diligent inquiry, with study of the principles of the New Testament, and prayer to the Spirit of Christ, he will find the solution of such perplexing question as speedily, satisfactorily, and safely, under the polity of Congregationalism as under any other system of managing Christian churches; and he will find the solution more manly, more commendable to the just popular estimate of what is fair, wise, and kind, when arrived at in accordance with the before-mentioned principles than in any other possible way.

LECTURE II.

THE PRINCIPLES OF CONGREGATIONALISM APPLIED TO MAN AS A RATIONAL SOUL.

THE merest glance at the principles, which, as we have found by analysis, constitute and difference Congregationalism, will reveal to thought one common characteristic. They all have a certain cast of religious cosmopolitanism, a certain quality of Christian humanity. They belong to the redeemed man as fitted and required to live in social relations with his fellows, as a seeker and discoverer of divine truth, as a workman pledged to and engaged in the reciprocal activities by which the world is evangelized, and the church edified. These principles carry with them no taint of any thing sectarian, provincial, sectional, circumscribed in time or space. They all, at first blush, show features which are common to man as man, and to every Christian as a redeemed man.

It should not, then, seem illogical, if we enter upon the discussion of some of their special applications with the presumption that the subject may be treated in a broad and generous way. The applications of *such* principles to the religious life and organization of Christianity, and to the welfare of the race, cannot well be treated otherwise. The task, so long as it is kept in the field of abstract truth, is neither unpleasant nor

difficult. What are the ideal and yet veritable relations of these principles to the complex constitution and activities of the human soul and of the Christian church, there should be earnest inquiry: there need not be much occasion for dispute. We cannot, however, overlook the concrete facts of our own history, while making the endeavor to apply the very principles which have underlain it all; and these concrete facts, both of the past history and of present experience, together with the definite questions of expediency or duty which they prompt, furnish tasks that are often unpleasant and difficult. As to what, judging from these principles, a true church polity ought to be, we might, perhaps, all speedily and happily come to the same opinion. Of what, judging by manifold experience and more manifold prophecy, actual and concrete Congregationalism is and will yet be, different inquirers, equally honest and diligent, will have differing opinions. We know no better way of conducting our inquiry than to hold by the clew of recognized principles, to acknowledge faults with frank contrition, and to seek all possible improvement in practice.

The next three Lectures will occupy themselves with certain applications of the principles of Congregationalism to our common nature and common life. We shall briefly consider how these principles stand related: (1) To man as a rational soul; (2) To man as a social being; and (3) To man as a citizen, or member of the civil state.

We have, then, at present before us, to inquire how the fundamentals of the true Church Polity stand related to the higher faculties of man; and to those faculties, of course, as they are active with what is true and beautiful in religion, and with what is morally and

spiritually good. It is not to be dismissed as a piece of sectarian presumption, or denominational conceit, if we assume that our church order, when essentially considered as a matter of principles, has in reality certain distinctive relations to the higher faculties of man. To say that any one of the many Christian sects has such peculiar and distinctive relations to the human soul as to be fitted above all other conflicting sects for the control and culture of the Christian life of the soul would doubtless seem invidious. And against all sectarian individiousness we will ever pray, "Good Lord, deliver us." We will begin, then, with this distinct and time-honored denial: principled Congregationalism is not a sect. We will, even for the time, if you please, avert, or at least postpone, the question, "Are we a denomination?" But these three truths we cannot fail or delay to assert. First, the principles brought to recognition by the analysis of the first Lecture are the fundamental and distinguishing principles of Congregationalism. Second, no other branch of the visible church of Christ has in its history so vindicated and combined all these principles as original Congregationalism. Third, the vindication and combining of these principles must, when considered psychologically, appear fitted in a special manner and degree to the growth of symmetrical Christian manhood; and, when considered historically, they are actually found to have made special and large contributions to such growth. *Ergo:* Congregationalism, considered both as a matter of principles and as an efficient cause in history, has a peculiar and distinctive fitness to the rational soul of man. *Quod erat demonstrandum.* We are, however, more than willing to hide the denominational name behind the principles: this we may do in imitation of

the skill and courtesy of the author who has demonstrated the "fitness of the church (meaning by church pre-eminently the Congregational church order) to the constitution of renewed men."[1]

The greatest and most agitating of all practical questions is certainly this one, How shall we produce the perfect man? Science, philosophy, art, and education, are all essaying the answer to this question. Science presents us with its scheme of that process by which, out of a merely cosmical origin, by the interaction of merely physical forces, and under the guidance of merely physical laws, man has been already so far perfected as we now find him. It proposes to render him as nearly perfect as may be in the future by continuing indefinitely the same process, and by subjecting it more and more to the growing intelligence of man, who is himself, however, wholly in and of the same process. To the question, How shall we produce the perfect man? art holds up the delineation of beauty. It may be in marble, or it may be on canvas; it may be in mid-air, where the frieze of classic temple and the spire of Christian cathedral reflect the glory of the rising and the setting sun; or it may be where, within that temple, the statues of heathen divinities display their strong and graceful limbs, or the worship of true Deity is swung up from the fragrant censer, read glowing in the stained window, and heard chanted by antiphonal choirs. Secular education proposes with tasks and drill, with hugger-mugger use of books and maps and charts, of question-papers, and examinations, with much sweat and clatter, to hammer out of raw material the fashion of well-rounded man. Philosophy essays to touch the deeper

[1] Address of Professor Park before the American Congregational Union, 1854.

springs, and let their waters up from below for the cleansing of humanity; or open the very sky-lights of the soul, and let the heavenly radiance down from above. All these — science, art, education, and philosophy — are contributing toward the desired product, which is the perfect man.

But Christianity also and chiefly essays the answer. In reply to the inquiry, What is the perfect man? it points a calm, unwavering finger toward the man of Nazareth, the Son of man. To the further inquiry, How shall we produce the perfect man? it replies, By the processes of a divine life, first regenerating, and then edifying, as a spirit who is one of a kingdom of kindred spirits, the rational soul of man.

Now, no diversity of the one church of Christ has any right to existence on earth which cannot furnish a reasonable exhibit of its special ability, in some definite place or time, to minister to the product of perfect Christian manhood. The Church Catholic exists in organized form, that it may impart saving knowledge of the will of God in Christ, and so essentially minister to the redemption of the human soul. But what reason of this sort can any sect have for its appearance in the body of the Church Catholic? Only with great arrogance, and with equal ignorance of history, can any sect claim that it alone is the minister of salvation to the souls of men. The interest which the present age takes in the welfare of man demands, with overwhelming and peremptory eagerness, of every division of the church in Christendom, Do you exist as specifically adapted and equipped to make men better than they would otherwise be? And, if not thus specifically adapted and equipped, what right do you show to exist at all? *As a distinctive church order*, are you prepared to claim that you benefit man?

In behalf of our church order we accept the fairness and dignity of the question. We claim that the distinctive principles of polity which we advocate are largely and admirably adapted to the uses of generous and symmetrical Christian manhood. We claim that these principles, if accepted and intelligently and faithfully applied, will make believers more loyal to Christ, and more truly independent of man, more spontaneous and free in the inquiry after truth and duty, more charitable and self-sacrificing in regard of fellow-Christians.

In the substantiating of this claim we consider first the desire and acquisition of the true. There is a fitness in these principles which are fundamental and distinctive of our church order, to cultivate in manhood the desire and acquisition of the true. Congregationalism, historically considered, began in an inquiry after truth. The truth sought was not the true creed among existing creeds, the true expediency in conforming to certain ordinances of men, the truly great doctor or rabbi who has declared his opinion for true, or the truth as to how uninspired men have done and spoken in days gone by. The truth sought was the truth of God: it was sought with all the heart, and without fear of consequences. The men of that day joined hands to walk through fire and water, into prison, over prejudice, to walk, indeed, "in all the ways of the Lord made known, or to be made known, unto them, according to their best endeavors, whatever it should cost them."[1] This attitude of free and fearless, but reverent inquiry after religious truth is as truly a boon to the cause of religious thought as the corresponding attitude in science to the

[1] Extract from the Covenant of the Church at Leyden. See Bradford's History of Plymouth Plantation, p. 9.

cause of scientific research. Nor has the benefit of this attitude of early Congregationalism in the inquiry after the true been by any means confined to the sphere of religion alone. The present scientific spirit was born in the Church, and nursed in her lap, as well as often indiscreetly chastened at her hand. The persistent questionings after the true, which have now extended to all kinds and kingdoms and spheres of truth, were at first chiefly questionings after the true in religion. We need not hesitate to assert, what history will confirm, — that the determined and fearless spirit of inquiry which moved within the narrow circle of believers in the Congregational way, both in England and in this country, has made no insignificant contributions, by communication of the same spirit, not only to religion, but also to science, politics, and philosophy.

The formal principle of the true church polity is a perennial source of strength and incitement to the pursuit and acquisition of truth. It is conceded, by nearly all even of those who do not regard the Bible as the record of the divine self-revelation in redemption, that the book is suggestive, and provocative of unstinted research. Augustine[1] compares Moses to a fountain which doth "overflow into streams of clearest truth, whence every man may draw out for himself such truth as he can upon these subjects; one, one truth, another, another, by larger circumlocutions of discourse." How many streams have indeed flowed from the one fountain of the writings of Mosaism, he alone is fitted to judge who has compassed all literature. If thus much may be said of the streams of intellectual quickening which have flowed from the Hebrew Thora, what shall we say of those which have flowed from the writings of Paul

[1] Confessions, XII. 27.

and the record of the words and deeds of Jesus? But the formal principle of Congregationalism definitely aims to secure all the intellectual benefits of the study of the Bible to every individual believer in Christ. In this aim it has indeed, to a certain extent, the co-operation of all the Reformed churches, and even the partial, tardy, and enforced consent of Romanism itself. But it is matter of inherited and organific principle with our church order to go beyond all others in educating the soul by intercourse with the Scriptures. The exegesis of the Scriptures is, by our polity, in a large and confiding way intrusted to the community of believers. This polity does not permit the fallacy of handing the Bible into the lap of the laity with the injunction, Use it *freely*, but be sure you interpret it *traditionally*. Historically considered, it did not begin with the assumption that its own system of doctrine and government exists by divine right, and that therefore the Scriptures are so to be interpreted as best to enforce that divine right. It began with the inquiry, What, rightly interpreted, do the Scriptures teach as the divine system? and with the promise, That system, whether it coincide with existing systems or not, shall be our system. The constant endeavor to test and improve the present results of the interpretation of the Scriptures is, of all intellectual activities, among the most important and invigorating. To get the best results in mental quickening from the study of the Bible, it must be studied in the Congregational way: it must be studied, that is, with untrammelled but reverent spirit, with the persuasion that it is still an unexhausted source of truth, with the hope that each individual student may make improvements in the comprehension of that truth, with supreme devotion to the Word of God, and with entirely subor-

dinate adherence to the word of men about the Word of God, whether this human word has been expressed in commentaries, creeds, confessions of faith, or acts of council. Not without reason did Dr. J. P. Thompson claim that "the system of polity which leads the mind to the investigation of divine truth, untrammelled by human creeds and authorities, gives the largest hope of such a [worthy biblical] theology."[1]

This same polity also gives a distinctive impulse to the search and acquisition of truth, by the manner of its systematic theology. The obligation of formulating and systematizing divine truths is placed where the obligation of interpretation falls. The local church must construct or choose its own confession of faith: the individual member of that church may do the same. The educative influence of this constant revision of the form in which eternal truths are clothed is not easily computed. The unceasing effort to distinguish the really true from the seemingly true, the essential from the important, and the important from the unessential, is a mental gymnastics than which there is none more robust and ennobling. This influence our polity secures for the laity; this gymnastics it offers for the discipline of every Christian. It even lays upon every local church, and every member of every local church, the obligation to some such mental exercise. It was not without significance that our fathers debated so hotly, sometimes even so uncharitably, the right forms of expressing these high and holy truths. To despise the efforts of the laity when acting together in the local church to formulate the most abstruse and difficult of truths, is to show ignorance and contempt regarding

[1] Article on the Congregational Polity and a Biblical Theology, New-Englander, August, 1860.

the method of God, the revealer of truth in history. The layman Grotius did more for hermeneutics than many a priestly or clerical commentator. The greatest religious truths, as well as the greatest truths of civil liberty, have not unfrequently been best enunciated by the common sense and plain language of the average mind. The same quality of thought which can attempt in the town-meeting the problems of civil government can also attempt in the church-meeting the problems of divine government. "We have," declares Professor Park[1] in answer to the complaint that Congregationalists have no creed, "a richer collection of creeds than is possessed by any other body of Christians. And these creeds, being drawn out for individual churches, are apt to be more carefully and less superstitiously studied by the communicants to whom they are appropriated than are any human symbols composed for promiscuous use." To have it laid upon the brain and heart whenever a new church is organized, or received into fellowship, or disciplined for looseness of doctrine, whenever a pastor is installed, or suspected of heresy, to search yet again for the true nature and valid ground of the profoundest Christian verities, is a spur to the most strenuous endeavor. In numerous other ways does the fundamental formal principle of Congregationalism tend to stimulate and encourage the rational soul in its pursuit and acquisition of the true.

Its material principle re-enforces the formal principle in this influence upon the rational soul. Of the creeds of the Congregational churches the author last quoted declares, "they are drawn out of the Bible directly;" and, again, they are "emblems of an immediate communion with God."

[1] Fitness of the Church, p. 24.

We may say of all truth, that it comes to the human mind as a gift from without, as a self-revelation of the Being with whom and from whom alone is truth. Pre-eminently true is this truth with regard to the true in morals and religion. In the conviction of it we are bidden, if we lack wisdom, to ask of God. "So Lord, so I beseech thee," prays the great Church Father, "let there spring up as thou workest, as thou givest cheerfulness and ability, let truth spring out of the earth."[1] "Whom shall I inquire of, of whom than thee, O Lord?" is his plea; "Thou light and truth wilt show me," is his persuasion. The French philosopher Malebranche falls upon his knees before the Eternal Spirit, and cries, "O Lord Jesus, my strength and my light, can I obtain from *thee* to know?" The German philosopher Trendelenburg declares that there is a "divine lineage" within us by virtue of which we know what is true to think. It is the fundamental material doctrine of the true church polity, that the self-revealing, and guidance into truth, of the divine Spirit, are vouchsafed to every congregation and to every believing soul. It is the practical combination of the two fundamental principles of such a polity that has brought against Congregationalists pre-eminently the same reproach of rationalizing the Bible which those sects that have come to a period in religion are apt to bring against their more progressive brethren. And it is, indeed, not simply a tradition, but also a fundamental principle of our order, to make large and confident use of Christian *reason* in the interpreting and supplementing of the Word of God; for Christian reason and "sanctified common sense" are only other terms for the consciousness of the renewed man as it is used by the Holy Spirit for

[1] Augustine's Confessions, XIII. 18, 22.

the revelation of divine truth. To have this consciousness is to feel the dignity of truth, the personal responsibility of every soul for its own dealings with truth, the hope and exaltation which belong to the human spirit when it knows itself to be in communion with the divine Spirit for the purpose of receiving his revelations of truth. To this combination of these two fundamental principles it is due that Congregationalism has been relatively so strong and rich in theological thinkers; for, as has been finely said, "Communion of soul with God in his Word is the high school of theology."

It would not be difficult to trace a direct and vital connection between each one of the seven derived principles of our church order and the advantage of the rational soul of man. Even the working of our polity in committing important questions of doctrine and conduct to the advice of local councils has had, according to trustworthy observation, no small educating force. "The candid discursive judgment," says Professor Park, "is exercised and strengthened by being trusted. . . . The mind is an empire, and the care of its virtues is a more than regal responsibility."[1] All the principles of responsible liberty for the local church and for the individual believer, which we have found to belong inseparably to our polity, tend directly to stimulate variety, richness, self-reliance, and originality in thought. "He thinks well who thinks as God inclines him." All the co-ordinate and supplementary principles which rather emphasize responsibility for the use of liberty, and for communion in thought and belief, tend directly to promote moderation, order, self-control, and charity in thought. The sleeping soul is roused, incited, and encouraged on the one hand: the too ar-

[1] Fitness of the Church, p. 11.

dent and irregularly active soul is limited, chastened, and quieted upon the other hand. These tendencies of the balanced principles of our church order will be made apparent at almost every step in our future course.

We now inquire briefly, Have the tendencies of these principles had their legitimate issue in facts? Has Congregationalism made especial and distinctive contributions to the pursuit and acquisition of truth by the rational soul of man? To scarcely any other demand from those who distrust and oppose our system of church order can we give a more satisfactory and triumphant answer. This system has intelligently and deliberately accomplished more for the development of thought in this country than any other one of the great contributing influences, we might almost say than all the other influences combined. It has been claimed by Dr. Magoun[1] and others — the claim is not a new one — that "popular education in this country . . . was substantially of Congregational origin." The various grades and kinds of intellectual discipline; the school in the house, where, according to the declared policy of the Synod of Dort,[2] the youth were to be trained by their parents; the "dame schools," taught by women of Christian experience, and members of Congregational churches, in which an effort was made to supplement the deficiencies of family training; the academies, which were to such an extent founded by Congregationalists, and conducted by Congregational ministers; the private instruction in fitting young men for college, which was so uniformly given by the same ministry;

[1] Article on Congregationalism and Education, New-Englander, May, 1879.

[2] This policy had been adopted just before our fathers left Holland.

the Christian colleges which have grown so thriftily upon the plans, funds, and toils of Congregational pastors and laymen, and especially out of the home-mission work of Congregational churches, — these all exhibit the claim as having a broad and deep foundation in history. An order of 1642 required the selectmen of every town to "have a vigilant eye over their neighbors, to see, first, that none of them shall suffer so much barbarism in any of their families as not to teach, by themselves or others, their children and apprentices."[1] In the records of the New-Haven Colony, even as early as in 1641, we find ordered, "that a free school be set up in this town, and our pastor, together with the magistrates, shall consider what yearly allowance is meet to be given to it out of the common stock of the town, and also what rule and orders are meet to be observed in and about the same."[2] According to Bancroft,[3] who, however, is probably mistaken in making his statement extend beyond Massachusetts, the law of 1647 ordered, "in *all* the Puritan colonies," that, "when any town shall increase to the number of one hundred families, they shall set up a grammar-school; the masters thereof being fitted to instruct youth so far as they may be fitted for the university." Our present use of the word "academy" is distinctively of Congregational origin. Most of the great academies of New England owe their origin to the religious impulse of our church order. Mr. Camp, formerly State superintendent of schools in Connecticut, ascribes to this impulse no fewer than sixteen principal academies which were incorporated in that Commonwealth,

[1] See New-Englander, July, 1877, p. 478.
[2] Contributions to the Ecclesiastical History of Connecticut, p. 249.
[3] Cent. ed., vol. I. p. 369; comp. New-Englander, July, 1877, p. 479.

most of them as late as the first thirty-five years of this century.[1] And Dr. Magoun enumerates forty-five principal colleges — eight in New England, twenty-four in the Western States, seven in the South, and six in foreign lands — which owe their existence, either wholly or chiefly, to Congregationalists.[2]

This enumeration of boasted results is, however, of small service for our purposes, unless we apprehend the causal connections which exist between the results and the involved principles of church polity. Congregationalism educates as a matter of life and necessity. These principles make it a matter of necessity, and even of life or death (1) that there shall be an educated ministry, who shall be able to instruct the congregation from that point of view where reason and the Bible unite, and (2) that every believer shall be able to judge for himself the true and truly rational interpretation of the Bible, and so to test the teaching of his instructor in religious truth. The first necessity produced the New-England college. The second necessity produced her common schools. The order of 1642 to prevent barbarism required "that all masters of families do once a week (at the least) catechise their children and servants in the grounds and principles of religion." The preamble of the "grammar-school law" ran thus: "It being one chiefe project of y^{t} ould deluder, Sathan, to keepe men from the knowledge of ye Scriptures, as in form^{r} times by keeping y^{m} in an unknown tongue, so in these latt^{r} times by perswading from ye use of tongues, &c. — Ordered."[3] The Synod of 1679 met for conference upon these two questions: "What are the evils

[1] Contributions to Ecclesiastical History of Connecticut, p. 251.
[2] Articles in New-Englander, July, 1877, and May, 1879.
[3] 29th Report of the Massachusetts Board of Education, p. 72.

that have provoked the Lord to bring his judgments on New England?" and "What is to be done that so these evils may be removed?" In answer to the second question, the synod laments that the college, once "full of students," and the "other inferior schools," are in such a low and languishing state; it declares, "As we desire that reformation and religion should flourish, it concerns us to endeavor that both the college and other schools of learning in every place be duly inspected and encouraged.[1] "The interests of religion and good literature," declares the same body of men, "have been wont to rise and fall together." On the hand of encouragement, in the ordination sermon of his colleague, Rev. Samuel Cooper, and as one speaking nearly a hundred years (May 21, 1746) after the enactment of the "grammar-school law," Dr. Benjamin Colman, senior pastor, thanks God for it as "a most wise provision which the very happy kingdoms from which we derive have been sadly wanting in:"[2] he also desires that the loss in these kingdoms should be repaired by enacting a similar law in them. He furthermore declares that the laws providing for education have been the cause of New-England's greatness, "the strong basis of our happy civil Government and Church-state." Congregationalism believes that converted men are *fit*, and that they alone *are* fit, to manage the affairs of the churches. But it no sooner sees churches and a ministry springing up on new soil than it desires to bestow upon the green and growing crop some worthy and helpful cultivation. The foundation of Harvard, which was at its inception so wholly designed to furnish a religious

[1] See Ulden's New-England Theocracy, p. 211, f., and the Magnalia, bk. v. part iv.

[2] Volume of Sermons in the Library of the Maine Historical Society.

education, especially one adapted to preparation for the Congregational ministry, was soon followed in New England by the foundation of a college designed to educate for converted Indians a native ministry. One of the earliest rules of Harvard was, "that every student be plainly instructed and earnestly pressed to consider well that the main end of his life and studies is to know God and Jesus Christ." It is not strange, then, that its undergraduates were expected to "read a chapter out of Hebrew into Greek from the Old Testament in the morning, and out of English into Greek from the New Testament in the evening."[1]

From a clear and consistent apprehension of the intimate relations which exist between the principles of a true church polity and the intellectual development of man, arises the sense of importance which Congregationalists have always attached to the quality of teacher in their ministry, and to the element of the sermon in their public religious services. This sense of importance has doubtless been relatively too much stimulated and exalted. It testifies, however, to a high respect for truth, to an honest purpose to consider the claims of the true. And it has effected large contributions to the desire and acquisition of truth by the reasoning soul of man. It has put the Congregational ministry upon their endeavor and upon their honor to be foremost in original and profound researches after religious truth. It has also made them readers and writers of books in an eminent degree. We fear they have not always heeded the truth of the words spoken by one of the most eminent among them all: "But yet some books there be, as Fernelius and other physicians speak of their pills: there are *Pillulæ sine quibus*, that is, *sine*

[1] See Historical Sketch of Congregational Churches in Mass., p. 29.

quibus esse nolo. So there are *libelli sine quibus*, some books *sine quibus esse nolo.*"[1]

The relations which exist between the principles of Congregationalism and the mental constitution and acquirements of man might be made the subject of an elaborate treatise rather than of one division of a single lecture. They are manifold, intimate, and essential; for this church polity more than any other has partaken of the characteristic of the modern movement of thought, has more breathed the atmosphere in which all topics and species of human researches are growing thriftier and being more invigorated with a certain divine life.

We consider now, in the second place, the fitness of the true church polity to cultivate the admiration and production of the beautiful. This consideration also has to do both with certain ideal relations and with certain facts of history. The genetic relations, by which the more distinctive principles of Congregationalism tend to promote that attention which the rational soul bestows upon the beautiful, are by no means so patent as in the case of the true; yet such relations undoubtedly exist.

Truth is beneath all beauty to hold it up in its arms for the contemplation of the thinking and admiring soul of man. What appear to the intellect as the barest truths of mathematics, physics, and physiology, underlie all the appeals made to the love of the beautiful by bewitching melody or moving harmony, by varied colors set to complement or contrast with one another, by soft, symmetrical, voluptuous forms. So, in the higher and the highest forms of the beautiful,

[1] John Cotton's Address to the Reader of John Norton's Orthodox Evangelist.

truth of the higher and highest orders of importance underlies them all; for we must not fail to apprehend the idea, that religion is able to use the beautiful, not simply as means, but also as affording a picture of ideal ends. There is even, then, more beauty in the truth of religion itself than in any of the symbols by which — beautiful means to a more beautiful end as they may be — religion strives to make its truth more comprehensible and impressive. The gratitude of a thankful soul is more beautiful than the incense, or hymn, or picture, which symbolizes this gratitude. The inner fact of loyalty to Christ is more beautiful than the most graceful genuflections, or fervid rhetoric of self-devotement. The giving of one's self away is more beautiful than the giving an elaborately worked altar-cloth, or an alabaster box of costly ointment. The free soul in the pent-up and ugly meeting-house is more beautiful than the slavish soul in the most capacious and gorgeous cathedral. Nor is the work and scope of the artistic imagination in matters of religion by any means so restricted as is often supposed. The effort to picture and illustrate the truth is a most strenuous and lofty employment of the imaginative faculty: so is also the effort to retain in vivid and vitalizing forms the truth presented. The preacher of the gospel, his eye kindled, his face aglow with the light that comes through the heavenward windows of the soul, is a great artist, and a beautiful picture as well. The divine hand never executes a rarer work of beauty than when it paints in bright and undying colors the Word of God upon a rational soul; for Paul on Mars' Hill, Perpetua and Felicitas exchanging the parting kiss, and Polycarp praising God at the stake for having deemed him worthy, are more beautiful in person than on canvas.

With that higher and more strictly ethical beauty which has its sources in the true we find the principles of our church order in most intimate and distinctive relations. Both its formal and its material principles tend to cultivate the artistic appreciation and the production of this highest order of beauty. It is also a principle of Congregationalism to bring before each believing soul the contemplation for itself of the deepest mysteries of our religion; and, in the contemplation of mystery, that form of the beautiful which we call the sublime receives the highest culture. No small ennobling of the imagination comes from permitting the mind freely to inquire after new views and representations of the deepest, most incomprehensible, Christian truths. Early Congregationalism was, as we should expect from the obvious tendency of its principles, in fact, characterized with a more intense interest in the problems of religion, an interest more completely distributed among the entire membership of the churches, than had prevailed until then from the days of the apostles. This interest brought every soul in the congregation of the Lord's people face to face with the sublimest and yet most mysterious realities of the invisible. The liberty of gazing steadfastly toward the infinite, roused by the indwelling Spirit, and guided by the Scriptures, a helpful church polity encourages in every rational soul. It thus incites and greatens some of the noblest exercises of human imagination. For "passion and enthusiasm," as says Dr. Post,[1] "feed on mystery, ever opening, ever deepening. They live in an endless vision of dissolving-views that are ever passing to aspects deeper, fairer, holier, in the everlasting unveiling of immortal truth." "This endless vision of

[1] American Congregational Union Addresses, May, 1854, p. 71.

dissolving-views" is the truly artistic way of seeing the otherwise invisible: it is all the more highly artistic when turned toward divine realities. The relation which exists between these principles and the admiration and production of the beautiful, if we consider only that noblest form of the beautiful, which, having its basis in the profoundest truths, stretches its aspirations upward toward those truths that are sublimest, is sufficiently obvious; not so the relation which has to do with beauty merely as means to an end. The studied effects of symbolism, the niceties of architecture, the delights of taste in worship, are not directly provided for in the application of these principles. To the cultivation of these beauties, when it makes an end of the means, and rests in the joy which beauty furnishes to the æsthetic nature of man, the principles are rather opposed. As for the rest, they rather recommend that simplicity in religion which is oftenest really good taste, and then leave other details to be given by authorities in the sphere of art.

We cannot, however, fail to remark how close, subtile, and intricate, are the general relations which obtain between religion and art. Those relations are deducible from the constitution of man, and from the very being of God; for the source of truth and of beauty is one source, even God. He who gives the laws of the spectrum is the same One who illustrates his own laws in the rainbow of the sky. Beautiful symbolism, if it be used as wings, and not as a snare, has its large place in religious education and in the services of religion. Such symbolism Mosaism deliberately essayed to use. Christianity, however, it is undeniable, began with new simplicity the culture of religion and the worship of God. To a large extent the simplicity of forms shown

by early Christianity is perpetually obligatory upon the Christian Church: the spirit of simplicity which breathes in all these forms is, indeed, universally and perpetually obligatory. The principles of a true church polity justly insist upon the recovery of this spirit of genuine simplicity. Having secured this end, and after guarding it with jealous watchfulness, they do not, so far as can be discovered, forbid all the uses of beauty which really serve the other great ends of pure religion. Congregationalists do not violate the distinctive principles of their church order when they admire and employ in worship all the beautiful which is really beautiful, all the taste which is really good taste. They certainly are not forbidden the use of all the fine imagery of word and the symbolism of concrete things which are really helpful in apprehending religious truth.

The complaint that our polity has not fostered and given scope to the imagination, has been angular, harsh, and bare, must be, when judged by the facts of history, admitted as partially just. The justness of the complaint is explained by the very facts of history which indicate it. Our fathers had a strong repulsion from those appeals to the sensuous imagination to which the ritualistic churches were in their day wont to resort. Yet we maintain the superiority, when compared with the best standards of taste, of those exercises of the imagination which their polity with its practices distinctively fostered. This polity demanded and elicited some of the loftiest exercises of the imagination It must be admitted, however, that these loftiest uses have been too largely its sole uses of this faculty in man. In architecture and other art ministering to religion, in the adjustments of worship to the delicate and sometimes cringing taste of the abnormally refined, in the presentation, by

sensuous symbolism, of spiritual truth to those not able to receive it so quickly or so powerfully in any other way, Congregationalists have been far from expert. Perhaps they have too often looked with unfeigned pity or unmixed scorn upon the grandeur and grace of architecture, the harmony of choral and antiphonal singing, or even the genuflections and crossings before the painted saint and sculptured crucifix.

There is nothing, however, in the principles of this polity which prevents their successful application to all the real and constitutional wants of the human imagination, although these wants be weakly and crudely expressed. And certainly our church architecture may be made more shapely and graceful, our forms of worship more elaborate and studiously cultivated, our observances of times and seasons somewhat more conformed to the customs of the Church Catholic, without our incurring any real risk of abandoning principles. In regard to all such matters we should distinguish between the impressions and opinions of early Congregationalists and the permanent principles of Congregationalism. The impressions and opinions cannot furnish laws for the future development of the church life: the principles, however, must continually permeate and control all that church life, if it is to have an enduring and expanding development. We may build and furnish our meeting-houses, conduct our religious services, and organize our forms for expressing the mutual and reciprocal activities of our churches, differently from the fathers, without contravening any of the sacred truth which they transmitted to us. We may even do all these things in ways which they would have stoutly resisted, and yet not be unfaithful to their sacred trust. Their opinions and impressions upon the æsthetic ele-

ments of worship we should regard with tender respect, but do not necessarily follow. The principles of the true church polity are those of the New Testament, and in following our ancestors in these principles we simply follow the spirit of Christ.

We should, therefore, not treat all proposals æsthetically to improve the manifestations of our church order as necessarily uncongregational. With many of these proposals we shall best deal rather by showing them to be inexpedient or fruitless.

There is now no sufficient providential reason, if, indeed, such a reason ever existed, why Congregational meeting-houses in country places should be as ugly in appearance, and barren in surroundings, as they possibly can be, and why Episcopal chapels in these same places should be easily discernible on account of some inherent grace of construction, and beauty of circumstance. Disgraceful architecture is not necessarily a means of grace, although most gracious souls have often worshipped God in very ill-constructed meeting-houses. A gifted professor in one of our New-England colleges is reported to have excused himself from attendance upon the public means of grace, by saying, "There are two things in that church I never can understand: one is why the roof doesn't fall; and the other is the sermon." The rationally unintelligible sermon is certainly uncongregational; but the architecturally incomprehensible meeting-house is not an inseparable distinction of our polity.

Neither is there a sufficient reason in the principles of Congregationalism why we should not use such amount and kind of ritualism and concrete symbolism as is found in any given case really to aid the spiritual worship of God. The attitude of opposition which our fathers held toward these things was patent, and, for the time, well

taken; but the principle which we have received from them regarding their own practices is a combination of liberty and charity. The spirit expresses itself in forms, and the spirit of beauty in forms of beauty. The spirit of beauty in religion expresses itself, to a certain degree, in tasteful forms of divine worship. It is not contrary to the principles of our church order to make proper use, in worship, of all genuine appeals and helps to the imagination: it is contrary to these principles to make it matter of contention and division in the church of Christ, whether or not these appeals and helps be used at all. It is a comfort to the Congregational pastor to know that he will not be liable to discipline by his superior officer for omissions, emendations, or mistakes, in ritual, or be involved in a quarrel with brethren over vestments, altar-cloths, and other like trivialities. If the local church desire it, and are really edified by it, the reading may be responsive, the singing antiphonal, the prayers in part common to minister and people, or in part with use of set forms. In all these matters the minister is the servant of the local church for its edification: to fear or to force these matters is alike unreasonable. When our ministers and laymen visit Europe, — and we have as yet no denominational law forbidding the practice, although, in view of its alarming growth, it might be well to have such a law enacted, — they are, not more than others, lacking in appreciation of artistic church building and decoration, or of what is beautiful and sensuously impressive in devotional services. Moreover, we may keep as many sacred feasts as we can keep with real devoutness and spiritual profit, and as many saints-days as we can find unimpeachable saints to furnish due occasion of edifying. Especially are services appropriate to Easter and Good Friday founded upon the most

momentous of scriptural facts, and in the most profound of Christian experiences. They are also honored by the ancient and perennial custom of the Church of Christ on earth. We may fitly wish and labor that the observance of these days in Congregational churches should become universal.

Congregational churches should be facile and generous enough to make room for all peculiarities of æsthetic temperament and training. Their polity is, beyond all others, in its principles comprehensive and adjustible: its practices should, in facility, correspond to its principles. The æsthetic nature is in some excellent Christians very exacting; but, if such Christians can dwell with us, we should be able to dwell with them. And a true, wise mother-church uses all the various elements of our common manhood, not neglecting the æsthetic, to give all her members opportunities for happiness, growth, and labor.

Especially in the following two respects should Congregational churches strive with intelligent and set purpose to discover and cultivate what is really both useful and artistic. I refer to church architecture and to the service of song. The idea which underlies the construction of the Congregational meeting-house is a different one from that which explains the construction of the grand cathedrals of Europe. A Congregational church is a community of believing souls: a building in which these souls gather for the expression and exercise of all their varied family life is called a meeting-house. A temple is pre-eminently designed for ritualistic worship; but a meeting-house is designed; first, for hearing the Word; second, for congregational worship; third, for social religious intercourse. The very idea of a temple demands that it shall be an impressive structure; but

the idea of a meeting-house does not forbid that it shall be a beautiful structure. As a matter of fact, however, the early Congregational meeting-houses were not beautiful: as a matter of fact also, in our revulsion from their ugliness, and in our pride of rivalry, we have given ourselves to the building of temples. The ideal meeting-house will be the most beautiful structure possible for the amount of money which it is right to expend upon it: it will also most perfectly serve the ends of effective preaching, devout and tasteful worship, free and warm social intercourse. May Heaven send us a race of architects who shall have mind enough to comprehend the idea of an artistic and serviceable meeting-house, and piety enough to remain faithful to the idea when once comprehended!

As to our service of song, we have too often painfully vacillated between poor congregational singing and poorer quartet performances, between frothy but fervid gospel hymns, and elaborate but inappropriate opera. Yet all the while Providence has shown a large sympathy with the culture of the beautiful in music by making the services of religion, and especially the praises of the Redeemer, evoke much of the brightest melody and richest harmony which the divine art of music can show. There is abundant material at hand for making the service of song in our Congregational churches both more artistic and more helpful. Inasmuch as the singing is no unimportant part of a stipulated religious service, the Congregational pastor as the leader of the brethren in their public worship should have a certain control of the choir. In order to exercise this control wisely, he should himself be taught to know what really good music is, and what really good congregational singing should be. It seems to me, therefore, that at some

future time the students of our theological seminaries will, as a subordinate and yet indispensable part of their seminary course, learn at least as much about sacred music as is necessary to make them skilful and helpful leaders of the churches, through the choristers and choirs whom the churches employ in their service of song. There is, moreover, a certain large amount of graceless and uncongregational lassitude, amounting even, in many cases, to disgraceful laziness, which depresses and degrades the quality of our singing. The truth is, that many of all our congregations, and nearly all in many of our congregations, attend church simply for passive exercise. They go to hear the choir sing, and the preacher preach. This disposition is both cause and effect of a depreciation of the element of worship. I fear that Congregational and Presbyterian churches in this country have been conspicuously afflicted with the tendency to make their meeting-houses places for passive exercise. The tendency is eminently uncongregational in theory: it results in practices which are as much out of good taste as they are insipid.

We conclude this discussion of the fitness of Congregational principles to cultivate the admiration and production of the beautiful, by saying, that, while our church order has done much to strengthen the higher uses of the imagination in the representation of what is religiously beautiful, it demands and admits of many improvements under the guidance of a pure æsthetics.

The fitness of Congregational principles to promote the love and practice of the good is a theme much too large to be even opened at the close of a lecture. The next two Lectures, and the last three of the entire Course, will deal more specifically with certain phases of this general theme. It will suffice at present to indicate a single line of thought.

All these principles manifestly tend to quicken and heighten the work of the conscience by quickening and heightening the sense of individual responsibility. Congregationalism places much weight upon the conscience of the individual. If things go wrong in the churches of Christ, the principles of our church order lay the charge of the wrong at the door of every heart. "The people are the church," — we quote again the words of Robinson, — "and to make a reformed church there must first be a reformed people." The obligations to improve the creed if it need improving, to subscribe to it if it be true, and to refuse subscription if it be false, to keep the Church pure by charity and by discipline, rest upon every conscience of its membership: *there* also rest the obligations to fellowship, mutual helpfulness of Christians, reform of the state, and evangelizing of the world. There should be no believing soul so debased as to be stripped of responsible influence in the administration of church affairs: there should be no one excused from the exercise of a good influence. Manifestly the normal and healthy result of the application of such principles to the rational soul of man must be greatly to promote the love and practice of the good. Manifestly, also, it must require a considerable strength in integrity of Christian character most successfully to bear the stress of the application. The cry of a true church polity is the old prophetic cry: "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion!" Every member of a Congregational church is, by virtue of this membership, obligated to the love and practice of the good. Every member must, according to the theory, be an active producer and guardian of the good. Probably it is due to this fact, that many persons, who, in connection with other churches, would never show any marked depart-

ure from their rule of faith, and standard of Christian morals, begin to sink toward a thoroughly disreputable condition of Christian life when they are put under the pressure of individual responsibility by their connection with Congregational churches.

The claim that the principles of our church order have a special and inherent tendency to suit the rational soul of man is by no means a fanciful claim. The true, the beautiful, the good, are for the Christian man. He is to desire and acquire the true, admire and produce the beautiful, love and practise the good. To promote all these exercises and forms for culture of the human soul, the Spirit of Christ has prepared in history, and set forth in the New Testament, a form of church life. This form, when seen in its pure principles, is that for which our fathers yearned and prayed and strove. It is bequeathed to us, however degenerate it may be, in sacred trust, for improvement and for use, to the end that the souls of believers may be made more like the perfect pattern of Christ.

LECTURE III.

THE PRINCIPLES OF CONGREGATIONALISM APPLIED TO MAN AS A SOCIAL BEING.

THERE is a wide difference between abstract principles and those same principles as rendered concrete in history. The mind which investigates historico-genetically any one of the more important and noble institutions of mankind will be much embarrassed by the discrepance between the manifest tendency of the principles underlying the institution and the institution itself as actually existing in history. A historic product can neither be understood without principles, nor constructed *a priori* on the basis of tendencies of acknowledged principles, and without regard to patent facts. We have seen that Congregationalism, in order to be understood, must be investigated in the historico-genetic method. Its institutions must be studied, that is, as developments from their own germinal ideas and organific principles; but they must also be depicted as they have actually existed in history. And just as the tendencies of all good and sound principles have been often and sorely baffled in the growth of the whole Christian Church, so has it also happened in the growth of our distinctive church order. Even the Roman-Catholic Church is not so readily confuted by a clear and consistent but contradictory theory as it is condemned by the facts of history.

In considering Congregationalism, then, by impartial application of its principles to various questions of fact and policy, we may expect to light upon many such embarrassing discrepances. The tendencies of these principles are in themselves easily discernible. But the facts of history often exhibit these tendencies as either wholly or in part baffled; and the full account of this baffling is by no means easily discernible. The acknowledgment and account of these discrepances between theory and fact are, however, demanded by our method. Nor are the best remedies for the troublesome discrepances between tendencies of principles and facts of experience any more easily discernible than the causes of the same discrepances. Meanwhile, the demand is imperatively, and to a certain extent reasonably, made for a church policy and for church institutions, which, whether they can be manifested in clear and sound ideas or not, will at any rate fairly well serve the temporary expediencies. The people are likely to inquire, — and to the people must be our final appeal for commendatory human judgment, — the people are likely to inquire, first and last of each church order, whether or not it works well. In our own West this inquiry is perhaps relatively exaggerated; but the inquiry is not confined to the West. What one well acquainted with that region says of its "new-comers," is, to a certain large extent, true of all people in all regions: "They cannot be expected to be governed simply by the precedents of 'historic Congregationalism.' They seek strength and efficiency. . . . They will not be much deterred by the charge of Presbyterianizing, or Methodizing, or Episcopizing." [1] Yet are there no more

[1] Rev. Henry A. Stimson, in The New-Englander, January, 1880, p. 126.

misleading and dangerous opinions or practices of so-called Congregationalism than many which arise as seemingly helpful answers to this inquiry after the merely good working system. The Congregational pastor should always be raising and pondering the question, What, in my own church, and in our church order at large, will, for the present, work well? But he should always be very careful what answer he makes to the question. In guiding him to the right answer the following considerations should have a large influence: It is, indeed, always proper to consider anew what are the true principles; it is, however, never safe to depart from true principles in pursuit of temporary expediency; and time-honored but only alleged principles should only with great caution be set aside. Fertility in expedients, skill in adapting unchanging principles to changing circumstances, abundance of new rules and methods, facility in reasonable changes, — all these are at the very least as good and valuable in the pastor of a Congregational church as elsewhere. But it is coming to be the unmitigated and almost overwhelming curse of our business, education, politics, and church polity, that we have so few men whose ideas are clear as to any other principles than the one so-called principle of so-called success. Congregationalism, like every other thing of growth, must learn to bide its time; not in ignorance, indifference, stupidity, and ease, but in sympathy with that divine energy of patience by which great ideas are suffered to remain in obscurity, and then, against opposition, and by price of human pain, to work their way to their rational issue in the manifestation of brilliant success. Moreover, the Congregational pastor must learn — and he surely will have speedy opportunity to learn — that nothing works thor-

oughly well in this sad world of ours. But if Congregationalism, as a matter of principles variously applied to human living in family, church, and state, is to be tested by its real success, it will bear the test better than any other church order since the days of the Apostolic Church. For there has been for two hundred and fifty years vastly more Congregationalizing, in principle, of other churches, than there has been Presbyterianizing, or Methodizing, or Episcopizing of Congregational churches. Congregationalism did not work thoroughly well in the case of the apostolic churches. Christianity did not work thoroughly well in the case of the ancient world. No form of church order has worked in the past, or does in present work, thoroughly well. But Congregationalism is, nevertheless, as a matter of principle, the New-Testament way of constituting and managing Christian churches.

These remarks are introduced in this connection to break the fall which both argument and feeling may expect as we pass from the social tendencies of Congregational principles to the social practices, and to the influences upon human social well-being, of Congregational churches. We consider in this Lecture the application of the principles of a true church polity to man as a social being.

The principles of such a polity as was analyzed and expounded in the First Lecture have an obvious adaptation to promote the social well-being of man. This adaptation concerns and comprises mankind in general; but it most intimately concerns, and most obviously comprises, man as a member of the kingdom of redemption, and as associated with his fellows in the life and work of Christian churches. This truth is made obvious by considering the relations which the principles,

both when taken severally and when taken together, sustain to the elements and laws of man's social nature.

The basis for adaptation of the true church polity to human social well-being is laid even in those principles which seem to tend toward the development of the individual rather than of the community; for in the widest survey, and with due time given for tendencies fully to disclose themselves, what is adapted to the best culture of the individual is also adapted to the highest social well-being of the community. The truth so clearly stated by Robert Hall is in place in this connection: "The duty of churches originates in that of the individuals of which they consist; so that when we have ascertained the sentiments and principles which ought to actuate the Christian in his private capacity, we possess the standard to which the practice of churches should be uniformly adjusted." In other words, the principles which should control *social* Christian activity are the same as those which give the highest *individual* Christian self-control. Some of the above-mentioned principles — especially the one placed second in our enumeration, and designated as the principle of individual equality and self-control — may, indeed, seem to tend toward the development of excessive oppugnancy and isolation. And no doubt modern Congregationalism has often pushed to an extreme the manifestation of schismatic and separatist tendencies. Perhaps it has not been thus guilty more than popes and prelates, or even than Presbyterian elders or Methodist bishops. Suppose, however, we admit that the excesses of the spirit of protest, and the evil practices of personal self-assertion, have been more sadly rife in New-England Congregationalism than elsewhere of late in Christ's churches. Does it follow that the polity is on the

whole unsound, unbalanced, or inefficient above others? Does it even follow that the principle of "sanctified individualism" can be safely or profitably ruled out of the constitution and discipline of Christian churches?

Let us, rather, remember that only in a "sanctified individualism" can there be laid a sound and permanent basis for social fellowship among believers, and social influence of the Church upon the world. The indispensable requisite of social power is a cultivated selfhood. It is not possible, either in Church or in State, to have efficient, ennobling, and blessed intercourse of souls, as well as the same manner of influence upon souls, unless the individual elements of the intercourse and influence are prepared in personal character. The constituent and elemental unit for that organic moral and spiritual unity which belongs to the Church of Christ is the sense of individual worth and individual responsibility. The quality of the social whole depends upon the quality of the individual elements. The quality of that great community which is called the kingdom of God arises from the fact that each individual member of this kingdom is himself a king. The social culture and social well-being of each local church are, then, primarily dependent upon the character of the individual members of which that church is composed. The followers of Christ do, indeed, fight in companies and in line of battle; but their success in warfare depends, nevertheless, upon the characteristics of the individual soldier.

This individualizing tendency of a single principle in the true church polity, when unsanctified, and unopposed by supplementary principles, has doubtless worked no little harm to the social well-being of Congregational churches, and to their Christian social influence upon

the communities in which they have been planted. But the valid use of the principle as sanctified and duly supplemented is true Congregationalism. The feeling which this principle permits to each Christian, that no man is or can become his authoritative ruler, his infallible teacher, or his mediating priest, certainly tends, when unselfishly held, to develop the practice of courage, self-reliance, charity, and self-control. He who himself acknowledges no human master or rabbi should surely be willing to have his brother Christian refrain from calling him my master, or my rabbi. He who, by virtue of his own principle, stands on an equality of self-control with every brother Christian, should surely not desire unequally to control any brother Christian. And he who, by virtue of the same principle, is trained in self-control, should surely be best fitted bravely and kindly to exercise all legitimate influence and control over others. The same principle of influence over others, as growing out of a selfhood held under control by the higher self, which exhibits the best results in rightly constituted civil government, will exhibit the best results in rightly constituted churches. The working of this principle tends to produce a church which is made up of individuals, every one of whom knows himself to be the freeman of the Lord; every one of whom, therefore, acknowledges every other one also to be a freeman of the same Lord. And it is only upon the basis of such "sanctified individualism" that the most winsome, endearing, and effective social life amongst Christians can be attained.

Upon this same basis must also be erected the social influence of the Church over the world. This principle of "sanctified individualism," instead of tending to the isolation and alienation of Christian churches from the

community at large, should tend rather to the winning of it toward the Church, and to the diffusion of the social church life amidst the community. "The third capital immunity belonging to man's nature," says Rev. John Wise,[1] "is an equality amongst men, which is not to be denied by the law of nature till man has resigned himself, with all his rights, for the sake of the civil State, and then his personal liberty and equality is to be cherished and preserved to the highest degree, as will consist with all just distinctions among men of honor, and shall be agreeable with the public good." And he adds, in a passage the style of which, like many another in his charming writings, reminds us of Jeremy Taylor, "The noblest mortal, in his entrance on the stage of life, is not distinguished by any pomp of passage from the lowest of mankind; and our life hastens to the same general mark. Death observes no ceremony, but knocks as loud at the barriers of the court as at the door of the cottage. This equality being admitted bears a very great force in maintaining peace and friendship amongst men." However, in fact, New-England churches have given to themselves, alone or chiefly, the benefit of this principle of equality, the true application of the principle gives its benefit to the entire community. From the consciousness of individual worth Congregational churches have apparently sometimes argued their social superiority to the outlying community: from this consciousness they should, however, have argued rather the equal worth with themselves of every individual soul in the community. With the legitimate use of the principle of "sanctified individualism," its tendency would be to purify and strengthen the social life of the Church, and to diffuse

[1] Vindication, p. 26, f.

that life by social intercourse with other churches, and with all men not yet gathered into the church state.

The same course of reasoning holds equally well with regard to two other principles of the true church polity. The principle of progress through individual inquiry may, indeed, likewise be pushed to an extreme, and so work harm to the social well-being of man. The crude forth-putting of new and strange views necessarily disturbs men socially. The path of the man who can always keep himself, or at least appear to keep himself, where the crowds are walking, is in the domain of thoughts most apt to be placid. To agree with others in opinion, to conform with prevalent views of truth, and customs of church life, seems, for a time at least, to conserve the delights, amenities, and safeguards of social church life. Intercourse between brethren who suspect each other of heresy, or of tendencies to heresy, is necessarily not so free, helpful, and multiform. Trials for heresy, counter decisions of councils, suspects in the ministry and in the laity, do not seem to make for higher social union of churches, or for more efficient social influence of the Church upon the world. And all these things grow out of that freedom of individual inquiry which Congregationalism encourages: all these things are painful but necessary steps in progress through individual inquiry. It is not strange, then, that many are inclined to regard this principle as tending to disintegration, dissension, and division of churches. But, in the face of such an estimate of the principle of progress through individual inquiry, history holds the insolent but inevitable question, What, then, are you going to do about it? Shall we either enforce that "uniformity" which "God never required," or assume that "infallibility" which "God

never granted us"? It should by this time be regarded as fairly ascertained that we cannot repress individual inquiry, and, moreover, that freedom in such inquiry is a prime requisite of progress. We may believe, in accordance with the reason of the case, and with a wide experience, that the granting of this freedom tends to conserve rather than destroy the social well-being of Christian churches, as well as the best influence socially of those churches upon the world at large.

In like manner the principle of the autonomy of the local church tends, not to isolation and oppugnancy of Christian churches, but to their firmer and more blessed social union and social influence. This is the principle of a *sanctified* individualism as in some sort applied to individual churches. The principle provides, in its very nature, for yielding to others all that is claimed for one's self. It lays the basis of the communion of churches in the intelligent self-control of the single churches which enter into the communion. It secures social intercourse which shall be between those who are, as necessary elements of the intercourse, best prepared to have with one another the best intercourse.

It need not be denied that even the principle of Christ's exclusive rulership has been at times pressed into the service of unsocial and selfish action of individuals and churches; but surely it will not be claimed by any Protestant that this is service to which the principle is legally bound, or for which it has been divinely secured to the Church of Christ. Jesus does not proclaim himself the sole king of his people in order that he may make them factious, schismatic, divisive, and rebellious under just human authority. The rather does this principle cultivate the highest sense of personal loyalty to Him who is the great ruler and uniter

of the world's social forces. It is not the sense of personal loyalty to *Christ* rather than to creeds, symbols, institutions, authorities, or official dignities of men, which constitutes the spirit of schism. Excessive organized uniformity under human rulers or leaders directly tends to foster schism. The attempt to organize the activities of the Church upon the basis of mere uniformity always produces schism. But a high degree of this sense of personal loyalty to Christ tends to unite all the constituent and elemental units of his Church in one free and yet grandly-complex organic whole.

There is no need to argue that the principle of the communion of churches tends to foster the social well-being of Christian men. This principle is by its very nature only the expression in set form of all the great ideas and facts which do both ideally and actually unite in one the different branches of the true vine. The thought of the true church polity asserts the law that Christian churches shall *appear* to be *united* just so far as they are *really united.* All individuals in any community, who have a loving trust in Christ as their divine Redeemer, are actually united: they should, then, all appear as united. If they can be got to unite in one local church, they should appear as thus united. And every such local church should *manifest* just such amount and kind of Christian social union with every other Christian church in the world as such local church under the law of the gospel is obligated to *have* toward every other church.

The working of the common-law principle of Congregationalism with respect to the social well-being of man tends simply to conserve the results of experience as to the proper methods and due limits of social intercourse.

But the principle of regenerate membership binds all

the other principles together in the social law and social life of Christian churches; for this principle provides that every member of the church shall be a true member of the kingdom of heaven on earth. The individual member thus becomes, with every other alike, a child confessed of God, a professed believer of his Son, our Redeemer. For such an individual believer not to endeavor to be and to remain in the most helpful and blessed social intercourse with other believers is to admit the loss of that love for the brethren which is characteristic of his faith; and not to endeavor to influence all men by legitimate social methods to accept the same Redeemer is to admit the loss of that love for mankind which is also characteristic of the same faith.

We are of the opinion that the Congregational church order, when working in its normal purity and cogency toward the application of its own principles, gives, of all polities, the freest scope to those Christian social instincts and sentiments which characterize the renewed human soul, and which secure the social well-being of humanity. In brief, the organization of the Christian Church, if true to the principles of its founder, will recognize the dignity and value of man as a social being. The Christian Church should be so organized as to make prominent this recognition in the very form and structure of its organization. Both sets of Congregational principles — those which apparently tend to individualism, as well as those which obviously tend to social union — are adapted to the social nature and social well-being of man. The former are designed and adapted to produce the right individual elements for a Christian union. These elements are individual souls which have been trained to free and intelligent self-control, and individual churches which have been, in their

social life within themselves, accustomed to the same kind of self-control. The latter set of principles are designed and adapted to bind these elements together in common thought, feeling, and action. It is distinctive of our church order to quicken communion by reposing, as Professor Park has said,[1] a large confidence in the practical wisdom of the renewed soul. It is also distinctive to appreciate whatever is right and noble in humanity, and to make use of this appreciation for furthering the kingdom of God.

I have claimed that the principles of the true church polity are pre-eminently adapted to secure the social well-being of man. But let us turn from theory to facts of history; let us take a brief survey of these facts as far as they relate both to the social defects and to the excellences of Congregational churches in the past. For Congregational churches have in the past shown most noble excellences, and most lamentable defects, in their social relations with one another, with other churches, and with the world at large.

It may be claimed, without fear of contradiction, that Congregationalists have held the true idea of the Church as a social union, and have also held a somewhat just estimate of the social obligations and opportunities of the Church toward mankind. Rev. John Owen, who, being both weighty and heavy as a writer, might fitly be called, in both senses of the Latin adjective, the *doctor gravissimus* of Congregationalism, lays down this principle in his celebrated treatise, "Of Schism:"[2] "There is, indeed, in the institutions of Christ, much that answers a *natural principle* in men, who are on many accounts formed and fitted for society. A confederation and consultation to carry on

[1] Fitness of the Church, etc., p. 9. [2] Works, vol. xiii. p. 177.

any design wherein the concernment of the individuals doth lie, within such bounds and in such order as lie in a ready way to the end aimed at, is exceedingly suitable to the principles whereby we are acted and guided as men." Many of the most important definitions of the Church given by Congregational authors make use of the words "society" and "associated."[1] "A holy society" is with Davenport a favorite designation for a true Christian church. The terms "house" and "family" are claimed by the same writer as appropriate, according to Scripture (1 Tim. iii. 15), to the same object.[2] The Congregational doctrine of a church considers it as a voluntary, and therefore social, union of souls who are bound together by the purest and tenderest social ties, and who actually meet together socially for the worship of God, and for instruction in his Word. The Church, with its assemblies and interests, by way of connection with the civil government, was wont to absorb very largely the social affections and social life of the early Puritans and Separatists; for it is true, as President Porter has declared, that "Congregationalism most reverently recognized the authority of its church and its officers, and attached the highest importance to church organization and church life."[3] And, as he has further declared, the discipline of early Congregationalism "attested the reality and earnestness of its church life, as contrasted with that individualism, now current, which neither cares for the communion of the saints, nor suffers for the want of it." It must be admitted, however, that this true conception of the local church as a social union of believing

[1] Owen defines a church to be "a society of men," etc. See Works xiii. p. 174.

[2] See Power of Congregational Churches, London, 1672, pp. 13, 27, 55.

[3] Article in New-Englander, January, 1880, p. 101.

souls, and this intense interest on the part of every member in the whole social welfare of these souls, have by no means secured the Congregational churches against many defects and mistakes of social intercourse. Early Congregationalism did not take broad and generous views of man's social nature as expressed in the church life, and of the obligation of the Church to recognize, amend, and improve this social nature. There was, probably, too much tendency to repress wholly, rather than to guide, and use for noble ends, the social impulses of the socially impulsive, and especially of that class whom the Church now treats with warmer, tenderer, and more considerate care; viz., the young. If New-England churches had for the first two hundred years been able to give a more genial and generous social culture to the young within their folds, they would not have been so far alienated from the people, and would not have lost to the world, as well as to the communion of other churches, so many of their choice sons and daughters. It must also be admitted that much of this discipline, so important in the social life of the Church, and, on the whole, so earnest and so well meant, was, nevertheless, the result of arrogance in church-officers, or of meddlesome and contentious ways in church-members. To apply suspension or excommunication to the brethren because they refuse to clear of error the elders, and hang down their heads with an alleged headache, and smile somewhat superciliously in the church-meeting, or to discipline the sisters because of a certain looseness of tongue and haughtiness of carriage, scarcely conduces to the social harmony and effectiveness of the local church.[1] The exclusion of

[1] For interesting cases of church discipline in early Congregational churches, see New-England Congregationalism, pp. 25, ff.; Ezekiel Chee-

the excommunicated member from the worshipping assembly until the church censure was removed cannot be too strongly condemned. This seems, however, to have been a peculiarity of the First Church of New Haven under Davenport.[1] It is doubtless in part due to the excessive use, and stately but unskilful ways, of early church discipline, that the present generation have gone to the extreme of disallowing it, and shirking its difficulties.

The respect and reverence accorded to age, social position, official dignity in Church and State, and especially to the pastor, teacher, and elder of the congregation, were strong, and, for the most part, serviceable, expressions of the social life of early Congregational churches. The Puritan looked upon the church-officer as constituted by the church: once constituted, however, he was, as long as he remained an officer, clothed with more than royal authority, and deserving of more than royal honors. The social force of reverence was exhibited in a marked degree, and we cannot doubt, upon the whole, in a wholesome manner, by Congregationalists of one and two centuries ago. The custom of seating the church according to the age or dignity of the occupants of the seats, the resulting custom of separating children and young people from their parents, and wives from their husbands,[2] the custom of rising along the aisle as the officer of the church passed to his place in the house, and not a few similar customs, have been, at best, of indifferent influence in promoting the social well-being of man. They have worked together, to a considerable extent, to induce formalism in

ver and Some of his Descendants, Boston, 1879; Dr. Leonard Bacon's History of the First Church in New Haven, Appendix III. The discipline of Mrs. Eaton, however, appears to have been well deserved.

[1] History of First Church of New Haven, p. 48. [2] Ibid., p. 48, f.

the social life, and to cut off that warm, prompt circulation of young blood through all the veins of Christian intercourse and Christian activity, which is so essential to the health and vigor of the Church.

The social relations of the church-officers with the people, and the social influence of the former over the latter, have, in the past time of our church order, exhibited both excellences and defects. That the Congregational ministry have, on the whole, exercised a most healthful and magnanimous social influence upon their own churches, there is no need to prove. The heart of the Congregational pastor is rarely the heart of a hireling. The distinctive tenets of his church polity, the very basis of principles upon which he stands as the officer of the local church, do not permit him to regard himself as other than the loving, faithful, helpful brother and leader of the people. In the best sense of the word "social," his authority must be wholly the authority of a genuine and Christian social influence. This has been, indeed, the real attitude of all genuine pastors toward their people, under whatever form of church polity they may have worked, and by whatever name — whether apostle, elder, bishop, or priest — they may have been called. Chaucer, living in the surroundings of mediæval Catholicism, understood the truth as does the most Protestant minister of America to-day. Indeed, when the old English poet says of the "poure Persone," "full loth were him to cursen for his tithes," he sets a good example to that great apostle of Congregationalism, Cotton Mather, who threatens dire divine judgments upon parishes neglectful toward their officers in the matter of salary. Chaucer's description of the parson is quite in advance of Mather's notion of the pastor.

"Wide was his parish, and houses far asonder,
But he ne left nought for no rain ne thonder,
In sikenesse and in mischief to visite
The ferrest in his parish, moche and lite,
Upon his fete, and in his hand a staf.

. . . . . .

And though he holy were, and vertuous,
He was to sinful men not dispitous,
Ne of his speech dangerous ne digne,
But in his teching discrete and benigne."[1]

Many noteworthy examples of such a truly Christian pastor do the written records and the divine unwritten annals of Congregationalism doubtless contain. Yet the sermons and other writings of the early Congregational ministry, for whatever reason to be assigned, do not, as a matter of fact, abound in passages which show their Christlike condescension to the poor, the spiritually weak, infirm, and lowly. They are also faultily lacking in passages which bring the compassion of Jesus Christ into close relations with all the mistakes, follies, and sins of the daily Christian life. It must also be admitted, that, in preaching to impenitent sinners as well as to the penitent sinners, out of which alone, according to the principles of Congregationalism, particular visible churches of Christ should be composed, these men of argument, denunciation, and entreaty, too often omitted to exhibit the touching divine sympathy in Jesus Christ. They, on the whole, largely failed to manifest their own sympathy with all the blundering, mistaken, and blind, as well as sinful, children of men. These sermons and other writings are not, however, wholly without such passages as we now seek; while they abound with other passages which celebrate the great grace, the holy love, the comforting promises, of

[1] Prologue to Canterbury Tales.

God to his people. More perfect than any other of these sermons which it has been my fortune to meet, in its recognition of the obligation of the Christian pastor to be of a piteous and gentle temper in his relations with men, is, perhaps, the "Convention Sermon" of Rev. Ebenezer Gay, preached in Boston, May 29, 1746.[1] The scriptural mottoes upon the title-page of the printed sermon are suggestive in the highest degree. They are, "But he turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of" (Luke ix. 55), and "Therefore take heed to your spirit" (Mal. ii. 15). The thesis of the sermon is this, and worthy it is to be remembered at all conventions, councils, synods, and ordination ceremonies: "That a dovelike spirit is a requisite and eminent qualification of a gospel minister." The statement of the thesis is, indeed, somewhat anticlimactic, and difficult of exact application; for, if this spirit is absolutely requisite, we may look upon the sermon itself as a lionlike attempt to expel a large number of that very convention from the ranks of the Congregational ministry. But several of its passages are, in the light of history, and for the end of precept, well worthy of quotation. A minister of such a dovelike spirit, he declares (the declaration seeming itself to be a quotation, from a source not indicated, and unknown to me), "is daily watching over the weak and infirm; humbling himself to perverse, rude, ignorant People wherever he can find them; And is so far from designing to be considered as a *Gentleman*, that he desires to be used as the Servant of all; and in the Spirit of his Lord and Master girds himself, and is glad to stoop

[1] The full title of this pamphlet is, A Sermon preached before the Ministers of the Province of Massachusetts Bay in New England, at their Annual Convention in Boston, May 29, 1746. Volume in the Library of the Maine Historical Society.

down and wash any of their Feet." In another passage he gives information which is not likely soon to become wholly inapplicable: "Continual and various Occasion hath a Minister for the Exercise of Meekness: Especially when his People are froward and will strive with him; giddy and forsake him; penurious, and withhold Maintenance from him." Again he declares, "A dove-like is a sociable, uniting Spirit. Doves go in Flocks, resort to their Windows and live amicably together." We are without information as to the effect of this following thrust underneath the waistcoats of his brother ministers: "We have been so divided in our Work and Way, so full of Jealousies and judging, so apt to divulge and pleased to hear Things tending to one another's Disgrace and Disadvantage; . . . there have been so sharp Contests between Fellow-Laborers and mutual Smitings of Fellow-Servants, such intemperate Zeal and satirical Virulence, as hath brought much Smoke and Darkness into the Sanctuary." It is certain that the Congregational ministers of New England for more than a century previous to this discourse had designed to be, and for the most part really were, "gentlemen" in the genuine sense of the word. But the discourse evinces the same truth which we may conclude from other sources of information, — that many of them were gentlemen of such haughty and austere and self-assertive manners as cost them the loss of much social influence over men at large, and finally over even the members of their own churches. This fault and failure was, in part, due to a certain coldness of demeanor rather inherent in New-England civilization, in part to the fact that the intercourse of these pastors was so largely confined within a certain grade of society and within provincial limits, and in part to that evil ten-

dency toward ecclesiastical exclusiveness, self-will, and excessive self-esteem, which has blighted the social influence of numbers of the clergy in all ages of Christendom.

Essentially the same excellences and defects which characterize the Congregational churches of the past in their internal social relations mark also their social intercourse with the people at large. In many of the more important elements of the complex social life of our nation, Congregationalism has had a very distinctive and highly ennobling influence. What it has done for society through the social forces of education, we have already briefly reviewed. We shall in the next Lecture consider its work in society through the social forces of the civil government. In and through the family, although its theory and practice were not without serious defects, its influence was, upon the whole, most healthful and invigorating. A writer upon this theme truly avows that it is the glory of New-England Congregationalism to have recognized the state, the town, the school, and the family, "as having been ordained of God as truly as the Church," and, moreover, "as in some sense co-ordinate with the Church itself, and having in themselves independent authority."[1] The Christian benevolence which has been called out by the principles of Congregationalism, and which has made the benevolent institutions of our polity conspicuous for promptness of origin, skill and efficiency of management, generosity in giving, and unsectarian charity in disbursing, may be accounted one of the choicest social virtues of our order.

But, after all, the people at large have not so heartily loved us as they have loved others who have done far

[1] President Porter, New-Englander, January, 1880, p. 104.

less for them: they have grudgingly acknowledged our services, and often shunned our company. We have been looked upon somewhat as the thriftless nephew looks upon the rich old uncle who sends him money to pay his bills, enclosed in a letter containing abundant fault-finding and good advice. Congregationalism has not been popular: it has been relatively losing popularity even in some parts of New England. And why? Doubtless many excuses may be set up which will in part account for this fact without alleging or admitting fault of its own. The causes of its slow self-propagation will be elsewhere considered. It is in place now to admit that certain social defects have greatly hindered the good will of the public toward our concrete manifestation of our principles. As to the principles themselves, there is not one of them which is not adapted to draw out and hold the good will of all fairly honest men. But the people know little or nothing of the *social principles* of our church order: they mark with keen eye and tenacious memory the *social faults* in its actual working. They do not study Congregational*ism:* they observe Congregational*ists.* It is not Cotton's "Keys of the Kingdom," or Davenport's "Power of Congregational Churches," from which the multitude conclude as to the social excellence of our polity: it is from the social bearing of the pastor and the deacons, and the more notable men and women of their own towns.

It cannot be denied that there has been in the past a certain social exclusiveness shown toward the multitudes by New-England Congregational churches. There has been a coldness of bearing, and a certain aloofness of intercourse, which has alienated the hearts of the common people. All this has doubtless been

much more keenly felt than deliberately intended. But all this is exactly what the people will not tolerate, no matter with how much real virtue of dutiful charity it may be attended. Moreover, the people feel that all this is directly contrary to the manifestation of divine love in Christ. These practical social defects of New-England Congregationalism have shown themselves in several deplorable results.

There has been a lack of warm-hearted, frank, outspoken interest and activities toward the out-lying populations of New England itself. Within sight of our steeples, and sound of our church-bells, on the hillsides which our fathers made to resound with divine praises, and along the valleys which their feet frequented as they came from afar to the house of God, Romanism, Heathenism, and Atheism have been gathering their children; and we have been quite too nearly unmoved. We have been content, in most unchristian apathy, to know and care little how the men and women of the mill and factory were disposed toward us, or whether they could or could not be induced to cross the thresholds of our churches.

There has also been an apparent feeling of aristocracy, which has alienated the so-called lower orders of the people even within the original Congregational communities. The prevalence of this apparent feeling is not due to superior education or purity of manners: it has rather been due to a certain unfortunate hereditary tendency, preserved within provincial surroundings from needed relief by more cosmopolitan customs and more thoroughly Christian ideas.[1]

[1] See an article of Professor Diman in North-American Review, January, 1876; and an article of Dr. Noyes, New-Englander, July, 1879.

There has also been prevalent the practical and even the theoretical denial that the true church polity will work, or ought to be expected to work, with efficiency outside of the limits of a certain social grade or social condition. This denial is an arch-heresy: it strikes a fatal blow at the encouraging belief that the principles of this polity are divinely adapted to the social well-being of man as man. And yet this heretical and fatal theory has been broached in meetings held to consider how best the gospel shall be, not suppressed, but disseminated, among the ignorant, the lowly, the vicious, the degraded. Convince me that "*the denomination*" is not adapted to men below a certain social grade, whether on account of their ignorance or vice, and you will please excuse me from "*the denomination.*" The rather should we cling by our principles, and adopt the views of those who declare of the Christian Church, "It will lose the general homage, unless it exemplify the greatness of the mind that was in Christ Jesus, who, for the rescue of our spiritual being, emptied himself of the divine glory." If Congregational churches cannot be planted and sustained wherever Methodist or Roman-Catholic churches can, then, in those regions impossible to them, we may be sure, and in all other regions we may be afraid, that Congregational churches will cease to exist. "To assume," said Dr. Post, "that Congregationalism may not live beyond New England is fatal to its abiding in New England."[1] And, indeed, when the Irish have taken Boston, where will Congregationalism retreat, if it cannot make Congregationalists out of the Irish themselves?

From this spirit of social exclusiveness there has also been much loss to our churches in the regions to which New-England Congregationalists have migrated. Many

[1] Contributions to Ecclesiastical History of Connecticut, p. 95.

members of our churches in the East have, upon going West, connected themselves with Presbyterian and Episcopal churches, simply because, if the truth were confessed, they could not endure to enter a society the social rank of which appeared to be relatively lower than the one from which they had come. Estimated from the merely social point of view, the Congregational churches of other regions of the country have not relatively so high a grade as those of New England: therefore, in many cases, they are forsaken of their own legitimate children. But, both in New England and in those other regions, all Congregationalists should be taught that the regard for social grading and social distinction is to be deliberately and decidedly subordinated to considerations of Christian principle.

There has also been a great lack of hearty social communion amongst Congregational churches. The principle of the communion of churches is most beautifully adapted to foster interchurch social life; but the principle has been thought of and used too exclusively as referring to the formal communion of councils, synods, and associations. We have spent more strength in determining how we may commune with one another in the third way than in the first and sixth of the Cambridge Platform.[1] And, besides, we have not well practised the "way of admonition" upon the theory of which we have spent most strength. An ancient sermon mentions, under the eighteenth head of sins of which the Church of that time should repent, "a want of sympathy with the bleeding, gasping, groaning, dying churches of Jesus Christ." It declares that "want of

[1] See chap. xv. sect. 2: "The communion of churches is exercised sundry ways. 1. By way of mutual care in taking thought for one another's welfare. . . . 3. A third way . . . is by way of admonition. . . . 6. A sixth way . . . is, in case of *need*, to minister relief and succor."

fellow-feeling with our brethren in their affliction is a kind of persecution, a kind of being accessory to their sufferings."[1] It has been a social defect in the past application of the principles of Congregationalism that we have had so little regular and consentaneous expression to our interest in one another as separate and autonomous churches.

We conclude this survey of the past with the following summary of results: Congregationalists have intelligently and firmly held by the true theory of the Christian Church as a holy society of renewed and voluntarily confederated and associated souls. This is an abiding principle of the divinely ordered and true church polity. It is only this theory of church polity which furnishes a secure and broad basis for a practical church life that shall be a most potent and elevating influence upon the social being of man. Within the individual church Congregationalists have shown certain marked excellences of practice: they have shown as well certain defects, all of which they have had in common with all Christian churches, some of which they have exhibited in characteristic degree. Outside of the local church they have shown essentially the same excellences and defects. These excellences are of such an order as gives to Congregationalism the glory of furnishing the great distinctive social forces of our American Christian civilization. In the large meaning of the word "social," the *social* influence of the adherents of New-England Congregationalism has been glorious; but the defects have been such as greatly to obscure and detract from this glory. In the manners of hearty,

[1] Sermon of Mr. Case, preached Aug. 17, 1662, and found in a volume containing farewell sermons which were delivered by nonconforming ministers on the Sunday just previous to the taking effect of the Act of Uniformity, Library of Maine Historical Society.

frank, kindly, and Christlike condescension to the lower orders of the people, they have far too often been conspicuously lacking. In warm and helpful social fellowship with one another as Christian churches, they have also been lacking. Their head has been cooler than their heart has been warm. They have exercised their great social influence in too much apparent aloofness from the real men and women who have indirectly been most largely blessed by this influence.

I close this Lecture with three suggestions concerning the improved application of the principles of a true church polity to the social well-being of man.

Congregational ministers must cultivate a larger and more efficient service by means of all the various legitimate social connections with all kinds and classes of men. They must learn to be winsome as well as wise, facile as well as faithful, genial as well as just. They must regard their work as lying with all classes of men, and their church order as adapted, not simply, nor perhaps even best, to the native New-Englander on his own soil, but also to all men on all soils of the wide earth. They must be convinced that the true church polity, as known in its principles, is adapted to man as man, and to man everywhere as a social being. As a system of customs and rules, of precedents and authorities, as learned from manuals, and debated in ministerial associations, Congregationalism is too often apprehended to be a somewhat which will work only under the most favorable social conditions, and which, even when thus working, results in alienating the common people socially from its church life. The power to adapt principles of church polity to the exigencies of various trials amidst all classes of society taxes the feelings and sentiments of the pastor and the people

quite as severely as their judgment. "Dearly beloved," says Rev. Mr. Watson,[1] nonconforming minister of England, in his Farewell Sermon to the flock he was leaving for conscience' sake, — "Dearly beloved, there are two things in every minister of Christ which are much exercised, — his head and his heart; his head with labor, and his heart with love." This condescending love for all men, and the manifestation of the condescension in most inoffensive and winning intercourse with the lowly and ignorant, is Congregational; for it is something better than Congregational: it is like Jesus Christ. The ambition of being the minister of the educated and of the socially considerable classes will destroy the genuine power of the pastor: it is subversive of the most sacred principles of our order, and it will, if wide-spread and unchecked, subvert the institutions, and ruin the thrift, of Congregationalism. Schiller's maxim — "Not one alone, but man as man, thy brother call" — would be for us the best social precept, had we not the far higher and authoritative injunction of an apostle: "Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate."

Again: Congregational churches must give themselves to the propagation, by social means, of their church order, regarded as a matter of principle and as a source of social blessing to mankind. The obligation toward the lowly, the degraded, and vicious of their own neighborhood, is one which Congregationalists share with all followers of Jesus Christ. To relegate that portion of the community who occupy a certain social grade to the Methodists, or the Freewill Baptists, or the Roman Catholics, is a confession of weakness, if it be not also a proof of an unchristian mind.

[1] Volume of Sermons in the Library of the Maine Historical Society.

All grades of society, and all nationalities, belong to Congregationalism: its polity is, when handled with sharp decision and yet with tender love, adapted to them all. I can testify, from several years of personal experience, that a united and successful Congregational church can be made up of original Congregationalists, Baptists, Methodists, Disciples, Presbyterians, Dutch Reformed, Lutherans, and Roman Catholics; of Americans, Canadians, Englishmen, Scotchmen, Irishmen, Dutchmen, German, Bohemian, and Scandinavian; of all degrees of wealth and grades of culture.

And Congregational churches must provide means for manifesting their love toward one another as autonomous and yet fraternizing churches. Money will not serve as the sole efficient means. Personal attention must accompany the pecuniary gift. Fellowship meetings, friendly visits and letters, communion in consultation over common interests, all the spontaneous as well as the more carefully studied manifestations of fraternal regard, are indispensable means of social intercourse amongst Christian churches. One bishop — a man with wise head, warm heart, and open hand — is worth as much to the feeble churches of any State as fifty per cent. increase in their home-missionary appropriation. Must we, then, have bishops? By all means: let us have as many as can be found of *such* bishops. Let every pastor be such a bishop. And let a way be found, in accordance with our principles, to have and to support such other personal activities, agents rather than machinery, as shall make our mutual love and common interest abundantly felt.

For the Church of Jesus Christ should be a chief source and centre of social forces: it is, moreover, the greatest means for communicating the social divine life

to all classes of men. And that particular form of church order, which, having been established by the apostles, is distinctively adapted to promote the social well-being of man, surely cannot, without fault and shame, fail of actually pronouncing a yet larger social benison upon mankind.

LECTURE IV.

THE PRINCIPLES OF CONGREGATIONALISM APPLIED TO MAN AS A CITIZEN.

THE two fundamental principles of a true church-polity, viz., the formal principle and the material principle, should determine the relations which members of Congregational churches sustain to the civil government of which they are also members. The Christian must inquire of both the Scriptures and his own spiritually-enlightened consciousness as to right conduct in civil affairs. He must find that point of union at which the principles of the Bible and the dictates of reason may be seen to coincide. The formal principle requires that he shall not violate the provisions of the Scriptures in his relations and conduct as a citizen. The material principle requires that he shall not go contrary to reason, which, in the soul of the believer, is to be regarded as the throne and organ of the Holy Spirit. The Bible and spiritually-illumined reason must be so consulted and interpreted in unison with one another, that the Christian citizen may obey both in the obedience which he renders to civil authority, may be faithful to these two forms of his one spiritual guide as a pledge and impetus to fidelity toward all forms of governmental control.

"The Word of God in the Scriptures is designed to

furnish, and actually does furnish, the sole objective authority, not only for the doctrines, but also for the constitution, worship, and discipline of the Christian Church." But the Christian Church is in the world, and surrounded by the institutions and discipline of the world. The constitution, worship, and discipline of this church, if not also its most abstract statements of doctrine, must, then, sustain very important relations to, and receive very potent influences from, the civil governments of the world. The believer must be a citizen. His voluntary allegiance to the divine authority of Christ is rendered in circumstances which compel him to an allegiance to the human authority of governors and kings and magistrates. The application of the formal principle — the application, that is, of the ideas, laws, and maxims of the Bible recognized as a controlling divine authority — to the duties of the citizen, under whatever form of human government, is often extremely difficult to make. This application, under a republican form of government, is in many respects always peculiarly difficult to make; for this form of government does not permit the same amount of aloofness, non-participation, or passive resistance, which is encouraged by other forms of civil life. Moreover, it is nowhere contemplated in the Scripture itself; such a government not then being a fact of history which the Scripture was in any case bound to take into the account. According, then, to the fundamental principles of church polity, it is only by the most cautious study of the leading ideas and general rules of Scripture applicable to the case, and by taking as a guide to such study the indwelling Spirit whose enlightenment and control are promised to each believer in Christ, that right views and right conduct can be attained in civil affairs.

We have further to consider that the true church polity should appeal chiefly to the New Testament for light as to the construction, worship, and discipline of the Christian Church. But it is the New Testament far more than the Old which seems to leave the conduct of the believer as a citizen out of its notice. Both Mosaism and Prophetism present the servant of Jehovah in closest relations with the civil government. They are both, therefore, rich in maxims and examples, as well as principles, which would serve for our most definite guidance, if only the case between the civil government and the believer were not so completely changed. Mosaism exhibits the government as a theocracy: it very fully directs the conduct of the citizen under its peculiar and now obsolete form of the theocracy. Prophetism exhibits the true servants of Jehovah as in an almost perpetual conflict with the civil authorities to secure at their hands a better recognition of the principles and practices of the ancient theocracy. It therefore gives many helps to those in every age who contend for the recognition of God and of righteousness by the government under which they dwell. The attitude of Christianity toward the civil government, and its implied instructions to believers concerning their conduct as citizens, are, however, widely different from the attitude and instructions of Mosaism or Prophetism. This difference is in part due to the surroundings of civil affairs, in the midst of which the religion of Christ entered the world, and in part to the spirit inherent in the religion itself. The early Christians could be expected to have little influence as citizens in civil affairs: few of them were indeed citizens at all in our modern and stricter use of the word. To have attempted a large direct influence would have

been madness, and would certainly have resulted in a complete misunderstanding, and probably in a permanent perversion, of Christianity itself. "My kingdom is not of this world," said Jesus. Its rule stands "in direct antagonism with that which ordinarily prevails in other kingdoms: the king discountenances all useless interference in the domain of civil right"[1] (Luke xii. 13, 14). Paul forbids assailing in a revolutionary spirit the institutions of civil and social life, and enjoins submission to the authority of civil magistrates, even when they work wrong upon the believer, and so far as they do not compel the believer himself to work that which is morally wrong.

From this conception of the relations of the believer to the civil government, the views and practices of the apostolic churches were formed. The principle of non-resistance to civil authority was largely used: a certain aloofness from the affairs of government was largely encouraged. As to whether a Christian might engage in military service, or hold civil or court offices under heathen emperors, their opinions were divided.[2] The believer was not to deliver himself for death at the call of the civil authority; but neither was he to resist the government by force when it laid its despotic arm upon him.[3]

Yet the germs for a somewhat different view, and for a decidedly different practice, in respect to the relations of the Christian to the civil authority, are not indiscoverable in the New Testament. That Jesus himself plainly foresaw great conflicts between the members of his kingdom and the governments of earth, we have his

[1] See Van Oosterzee's Theology of the New Test., sect. x. 2, and xli. 8, and Schmid, Biblische Theologie des Neuen Test., pp. 282, ff.

[2] See Neander, Memorials of Christian Life, Bohn's ed., chap. xv.

[3] Ibid., chap. xiii.

own word for believing. He even represents these conflicts as the inevitable result of the divine purpose in his coming. The contest in arms between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light is inevitable; and in that contest the lives of his disciples are necessarily involved. "I came not to send peace, but a sword."[1] The Church is only a part of one great whole, the divine family in heaven and in earth, which must be brought into a harmonious union in Christ. But this unifying of all things in the Redeemer can come about only as the final result of a mighty conflict between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of darkness and death under the leadership of his great enemy.[2] It is inevitable, then, that disciples shall in many ways and times and regions of the world be forced from their attitude of aloofness and passive resistance into the position of a mortal combat and life-and-death grapple with the organized forces of this opposing kingdom. It may even come about, yes, in the fulness of time it must come about, that these disciples will themselves be in position to constitute and control the civil government. This they must do, if at all, regardful of the two sides of the one great truth, "My kingdom is not of this world;" and yet "The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ."

Among the secondary or derived principles of a true church polity it is obvious that the first one — viz., the

[1] See Meyer's comment on Matt. x. 34: "Die *telische* Ausdrucksweise is nicht bloss rednerisch, als Ausdruck des unausbleiblichen *Erfolgs*, sondern Jesus spricht wirklich einen *Zweck* aus, nicht den *Endzweck* seines Gekommenseins, aber einen *Mittelzwek*, indem ihm die wechselseitig feindselige Erregung als nothwendiges Uebergangsverhältniss, welches er daher nach seiner Messianischen Bestimmung zunächst herzustellen gesandt sein muss, klar vor Augen steht."

[2] See Schmid, Theologie des Neuen Test., p. 575, f.

principle of Christ's exclusive rulership — has the most intimate and important relations to man as existing under civil government. This principle makes obedience to the king of a spiritual kingdom always positively obligatory: it also forbids obedience to other rulers when they command what is contrary to the law of this king. The principle is very far indeed from commending the overthrow of even the unchristian governments under which believers are obliged to live. The schemes of Nihilism find no shelter in this principle. The working of the principle is constructive of good citizenship under the existing civil order: it does not seek as a condition of construction the second coming of chaos and old night. And yet there are within this principle the resources of the most determined, persistent, and unconquerable resistance to civil authority; for, although Christ is not a king in the room of Cæsar, he is indeed a king, and in his own realm of ever-widening manifestation of authority he is exclusive and supreme king. It was the instinctive recognition of the indomitable resistance offered at certain points by this principle, which so angered the Roman imperialism against early Christianity. It was this, also, which so extravagantly irritated the mean spirits of King Henry Eighth and his daughter, Queen Elizabeth. "I will call the emperor lord," said one of the church fathers, "but only when I am not compelled to call him Lord instead of God. Otherwise I am free before him; for I have only one Lord, the almighty and eternal God, — the same who is his Lord also." The working of this principle under all ordinary exigencies of imperial or kingly oppression permits to the believer in Christ only a passive resistance to the requirements of the civil authority.

But the application of this first one of the secondary principles of a true church polity to the life of man as a citizen is re-enforced and somewhat modified by another principle. The principle to which we now refer is that of individual equality and self-control. In the New Testament this principle is, for the most part, presented in the forms of exhortation to duty. It is primarily announced in a manner to break down, rather than raise up, the haughty will of man. Its declaration is not so much, You are in the sight of God and in the kingdom of Christ on an equality with your brother, but, rather, Every member of this kingdom is your brother, and on an equality with you. The course of modern history proves, what we might infer from the very nature of human society and of the human mind, that this principle cannot obtain recognition in the Church without influencing the State also. Indeed, in all of this history hitherto, Church and State have been so commixed, that the suppression or the exaltation of the principle of equality in them both together has been inevitable. "As Christianity," says Neander,[1] "brought into consciousness the same image of God in all men, set free the development of humanity from the narrow boundaries of the State, subordinating all to the same level, and destroyed the ancient stand-point of state religion, so, also, ideas of religious freedom and the rights of conscience, which were unknown to the ancient world, were first diffused abroad by Christianity." "It is," says Tertullian to the Roman proconsul Scapula, "one of the rights of man, and belongs to the natural freedom of every one, to worship according to his convictions; and the religion of one can neither injure nor profit others. But it is not religion to em-

[1] Memorials of Christian Life, p. 35.

ploy force in religion; for religion must be voluntary, and received without compulsion." Those who are bound by principle to regard one another as essentially equal, and as alike obligated to self-control, in ecclesiastical affairs, cannot be expected to refrain from making the very reasonable transition in the application of a similar principle to civil affairs. They are likely to reverse the question of Rev. John Wise, and inquire, Must men "adorned with a double sett of ennobling immunities," "when they enter into a charter-party to manage a trade" for earth (for heaven, he writes in the proposition) "*ipso facto* be clapt under a government that is arbitrary and despotic?" Indeed it would not be out of the way to say that the very modern idea of government as a "charter-party" entered into by equals is of Congregational origin.

These before-mentioned two principles have an obvious application and an important influence whenever we consider the rights and duties of man as a member of the civil government. The remaining five of the secondary principles have only an indirect application to our theme. The true church polity binds its adherent to recognize no other absolute authority than Jesus Christ: it both commands and empowers him to resist, to the last degree of passive resistance, every attempt made by a hostile civil government to enforce obedience to itself which is contrary to the commands of Jesus Christ. At the same time it teaches that the kingdom of the Redeemer is a spiritual kingdom, and therefore must not itself usurp the place, or use the methods, of worldly rule. Under this principle, the judgment of the believer is exercised in the effort to discover how he may scrupulously and faithfully "render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things

that are God's." On the other hand, the principle of individual equality and self-control is one from the beginning almost certainly designed and destined to find expression for itself in the State as well as in the churches, and therefore to modify, if it do not completely overthrow, all governments which are based upon inherited or usurped distinctions of title, rank, or official control.

The narrative of that work, which the actual application of the principles of Congregationalism to man as a citizen has wrought in modern history, has been frequently told. It would be both impertinent and impossible to improve upon this narrative. It would, however, render all the previous discussion of this Lecture unprofitable, as well as defeat its final purpose, if I did not call your attention to certain important points of doctrine illustrated in the narrative.

And first of all let us observe how faithfully, through many trying years, the founders of modern Congregationalism carried out, in their conduct as citizens, the duty of passive resistance to the demands of the civil government for an allegiance to itself which was contrary to allegiance to Christ. The attitude of those persecuted souls toward the civil authority is precisely that of the early Church. It is the attitude into which the persecuted Church is thrown by the principle of Christ's exclusive rulership: "We will call the king lord, but only when we are not compelled to call him Lord, instead of Christ." "Whenever they persecute you in this city, flee ye into the other," was the instruction of Jesus; and so did John Robinson, William Brewster, John Cotton, Thomas Hooker, John Davenport, and many others of the men to whom the institutions of New-England Congregationalism are

due. The writings of these men abound with the just claim, that the civil government has no right to compel believers to confessions of faith, or ceremonies, or forms of instituting and managing Christian churches, which are not according to the mind of Christ. It has been in and through the same great movement of thought to which they contributed so much, that we have, after centuries, returned to the ancient doctrine laid down by Tertullian: "It is one of the rights of man to worship according to his convictions . . . but it is not religion to employ force in religion."

The charge has been made against Congregationalists in New England, that they, under changed circumstances, reversed the principle which they had formerly advocated, and, having themselves fled from persecution, proceeded to put those who differed from them to flight before their persecution. They cannot be wholly vindicated against this charge. We can say of them that they were, upon the highway of nations in progress toward the principle of civil and religious liberty, in advance of all others. We can show how they justified the intervention of the civil arm on the ground that the offences to be punished were duly cognizable as civil affairs. But the same plea may be made for the Roman emperors in their persecution of the early Christians, and for the English kings and queens in their persecution of nonconforming subjects: indeed, an additional claim of justice might be brought forward in the latter case, on the ground that the headship of Church and of State was by law invested in the same person. The Parliament of England, by the Act of 1534, conferred upon the civil ruler, Henry VIII., the title of "sole and supreme head of the Church of England," and gave him the right of final decision in matters of

doctrine. And the Parliament of 1559 re-established by its act the ecclesiastical supremacy of the crown, and authorized the Queen, Elizabeth, to constitute a High Commission Court for the trial and punishment of all errors, heresies, divisions, abuses, and contempt in ecclesiastical affairs. If the headship of the State, as belonging to all the citizens, may constitute itself a headship of the Church, why may it not also as belonging to king or queen? We should, indeed, also recognize the great embarrassments to which our fathers were subject from the uncertain and capricious relations in which they were forced to live toward the mother-country. They did many things as citizens, for fear of evil report in England, or to guard against the possibility of usurped control and influence from England in their own churches, which otherwise they would not have done.

By no one way, however, and not by all ways combined, can we clear them from defects, weaknesses, and even sins, in their adjustment of the relations which should exist between their churches and the civil government. Originally, in the institutions of New England, this principle of Christ's exclusive rulership was pushed to an extreme which destroyed the principle itself. The State was to be constituted out of the Church, was, indeed, to be the other side of the Church: the saints were to rule so much of the earth as had been granted them by their letters-patent. But severely did their principle, when thus pushed, and striking against the wall of human rights in civil government, re-act upon them. One part of the Church State arrayed itself against another part; or the Church State interfered with the churches to the damage of the interests of both.

The Cambridge Platform declares,[1] not only that blasphemy, but also that "heresy, venting corrupt and pernicious opinions that destroy the foundation," "are to be restrained and punished by civil authority." It also declares[2] that "if any church, one or more, shall grow schismatical, rending itself from the communion of other churches, or shall walk incorrigibly or obstinately in any corrupt way of their own, contrary to the rule of the Word, in such case the magistrate is to put forth his coercive power as the matter shall require." The preceding article of the platform declares, indeed, that "erroneous opinions not vented" are not "object of the power of the magistrate." In a document entitled "An Abstract of the Laws of New England," which was, according to Uhden,[3] printed in London in 1635, heresy is declared to be "the stubborn maintenance of a destructive error which subverts the foundations of the Christian religion:" if connected with attempts to seduce others, it shall be punished with death as a species of idolatry. We may, therefore, perhaps venture to consider the clause in the platform which speaks of "venting corrupt and pernicious opinions that destroy the foundation," as giving a *quasi* definition of heresy. Its punishment might, then, in certain cases, seem justifiable on the principle that the foundations of the civil government and of the Christian religion were, in the minds of our fathers, identical: the subversion of the one would involve the subversion of the other. The subsequent conduct of the General Court shows their disposition to magnify their office as regulators of the religious opinions and practices of men, although, on complaint being made, they are ready to resort to another principle

[1] Chap. xvii. 8. [2] Chap. xvii. 9.
[3] New-England Theocracy, p. 68, note.

in explanation of their acts. For instance, the law passed by this court in 1644 against Anabaptists is specifically directed against such as "have held the baptizing of infants unlawful," and threatens punishment upon those who "either openly condemn or oppose the baptizing of infants, or go about secretly to seduce others from the approbation or use thereof;" but the vindication offered for the law in 1646 alleges the trouble and hazard in civil life occasioned by Familistical and Anabaptistical spirits, and gives liberty of judgment to those who live "without occasioning disturbance."

The admonition of the General Court to the church of Salem for their invitation to Roger Williams is an instance of the exercise of the authority of the civil arm as recognized in the Cambridge Platform. The application of the principle there laid down was, however, in practice quite indefinite; and even the history of the case of the church in Salem is not altogether clear. This same court did, nevertheless, dare most flagrantly to violate more than one principle of Congregationalism when in 1651 it fined in a heavy sum the church at Malden for having chosen a minister without the agreement of neighboring churches, and without permission from the government.[1] This same authority forbade the North Church in Boston to choose one Powell for their pastor. In Connecticut, as well as in Massachusetts, many violations of the principles of Congregationalism, by interference of the civil authority in affairs of the churches, might be brought in review. In the former State the law of 1742 for the suppression of enthusiasm forbade, under heavy penalty, any ordained or licensed preacher to preach or exhort within the limits of any parish without the consent of the pastor and the major-

[1] See Uhden, New-England Theocracy, p. 163.

ity in that parish. This law worked great oppression to the North Church of New Haven; for, attempting to preach in that church, Rev. Samuel Finley (afterward president of Princeton College) was arrested, and carried out of the Colony as a vagrant.[1]

No little mischievous interference of the government with the synods and councils of the churches also resulted from the partial disregard of this principle of the true church polity. The principle definitely asserts that Christian churches have no ruler but Christ, and therefore that no church can rightly use the civil arm to rule another church, nor can all other churches combined use that arm to rule a single weakest church. Of such interference the case of the General Court with the church at Hartford affords several notable instances.

As to the persecution by the civil power of those who were not members of the early Congregational churches, whether in the form of express penalties, or civil disabilities, or compulsion to pay taxes for the support of these churches, it does not concern my theme to speak. The various narratives of these acts of persecution make a mingled impression of admiration and shame. The reasons offered by apologists for these acts are quite sufficient to save our hearty veneration for the actors, but not sufficient to command our approval of the acts. The excuses are historically valid; but morally they do excuse. The faults of our fathers are in some respects all the more lamentable, because they are not instances of oppression from an ungodly world upon the Christian Church, but rather of Christian churches organizing themselves into oppressive

[1] See Contributions to the Ecclesiastical History of Connecticut, p. 119, f.

forms of civil government. They are not assaults of Antichrist upon the Church: they are rather mistakes and weaknesses of the saints themselves. In brief, we have to acknowledge that Congregationalism in New England departed from its own thoroughly Christian position of acknowledging Christ's exclusive rulership in both forms of the principle; that is, both in the form of yielding to others their own control under Christ, and in that of offering a merely passive resistance to the control of an unchristian state. The departure was a departure of the Congregational churches, and the resulting usurpations of the civil government were the outcome of the acts of these churches.

It would, however, be but simple justice, if it were not also the inclination of filial reverence, to admit that almost all these violations of this principle were occasioned by mistaken application of principle. Every application of the principles of any church polity to man as a citizen rests, of course, upon the assumption that the interests of civil and of religious affairs are most intimately united. Now, no other men ever believed more thoroughly than did the early Congregationalists of New England that the foundations of good civil government are in religion; that the State as well as the Church is subject of divine law and divine control; and that good citizens are of necessity servants of God. "Two things in the founders of New England," says Uhden,[1] "particularly strike the observer, — their devotion to the common weal as citizens, and to the interests of the Church as Christians. They regarded themselves, not as individual fugitives from oppression and persecution, but rather as confederates in a political association, and members of a

[1] New-England Theocracy, p. 135.

religious community." It is from the point of view furnished by this true principle of an intimate connection between the civil government and the religious life of the citizens, that they proceeded, even in the course of their violations of other true principles. From this point of view the General Court at Boston regarded its functions, when, May 18, 1631, it provided, that for "the future no one shall be admitted to the freedom of this body politic, unless he be a member of some church within the limits of the same." In the organization of all the Colonies there is apparent the work of men whose citizenship is the expression of their religion. The State was, therefore, simply the organization of the Church in civil form. In the New-Haven Colony the "foundation men" of the State were the pillars of the Church. In the meeting in Mr. Newman's barn, at which the foundations of both State and Church in the Colony were laid, it was voted that "free burgesses shall be chosen out of the church-members, — they that are in the foundation-work of the church."[1] This action was taken on the principle laid down by Cotton, and practised by the Colonies of New England: "It is better that the commonwealth be fashioned to the setting-forth of God's house, which is his Church, than to accommodate the Church frame to the civil State."[2] Or, as Hooker was fond of quoting from Cartwright, "No man fashioneth his house to his hangings, but his hangings to his house."

In view of the great difficulty, already spoken of, which is met in the attempt to apply the formal principle of Congregationalism to the details of citizenship, our fathers felt no dismay. They supplemented

[1] History of the First Church in New Haven, Discourse II.
[2] Letter to Lord Say and Seal: Hutchinson 1, 497.

the legitimate deductions from principles of the New Testament by copious use of laws, usages, examples, and injunctions of the Old Testament. The planters of New-Haven Colony organized their civil State upon the principle that "the Scriptures do hold forth a perfect rule for the direction and government of men in all duties, as well in families and commonwealth, as in matters of the Church."[1] In 1644 the General Court of this Colony ordered, "that the judicial laws of God as they were delivered by Moses, and as they were a fence to the moral law, being neither typical nor ceremonial, nor having any reference to Canaan, shall be accounted of moral equity, and generally bind all offenders, and be a rule to all the courts in this jurisdiction in their proceedings against offenders, till they be branched out into particulars hereafter."[2] So far as these and similar acts and enactments of early Congregationalists show their confidence in those principles of civil righteousness that are exhibited in the Word of God, they cannot be too highly commended. But so far, on the other hand, as they show an undoubted tendency to confound things different, a strong disposition to drive public morality as an affair of church control with a high hand, and a plainly mistaken point of view with respect to the method in which the laws of the Old Testament have their applicability to modern life, they are worthy of regret and disavowal.

The Congregational principle of individual equality and self-control in church affairs has been the most important factor in the modern development of religious and civil liberty. The testimony to this truth, in respect both to the work of the Puritans in Old England,

[1] History of the First Church in New Haven, p. 20, f.
[2] Ibid., p. 29. A statement and defence of this action.

and to that of New-England Congregationalists, is unequivocal and competent. I quote at second hand a few sentences which are said to have come from distinguished pens and lips.[1] "To this sect," says Hume of the Puritans, "the English owe the whole freedom of their constitution." Lord Brougham affirms of the Independents, "They, with whatever ridicule some may visit their excesses, or with whatever blame others, — they, with the zeal of martyrs and with the purity of the early Christians, the skill and courage of the most renowned warriors, achieved for England the free constitution which she now enjoys." "As for toleration," declares Lord King, "or any true notion of religious liberty, or any general freedom of conscience, we owe them not in the least degree to what is called the Church of England. On the contrary, we owe all these to the Independents in the time of the Commonwealth, and to Locke, their most enlightened and illustrious disciple." "To Congregationalism," says David Hale, "we doubtless owe the free and happy structure of our political institutions." Bancroft speaks of the civil compact formed by the Plymouth Colony as "the birth of popular constitutional liberty;" and of the Pilgrims as the "men who, as they first trod the soil of the New World, scattered the seminal principles of Republican freedom and national independence." It was the opinion of Pitt, "that, if the Church of England had been efficiently established in the North-American Colonies, they would never have refused allegiance to the British crown." "These village Hampdens who came up to Boston year after year, and voted solidly

[1] See Church Polity of the Pilgrims, p. 64, f. and Appendix F; American Congregational Union Addresses, May, 1854, p. 13, f; Congregational Tracts, No. 1, said to be written by Rev. Z. K. Hawley, p. 13, f.

to disobey the royal orders, were the offspring of town-meetings and the Puritan church system," so it is truly asserted by a writer in "The North-American Review." It is said that Jefferson derived his "best plan of government for the American Colonies" from the church-meetings of a church conducted upon Congregational principles.

Moreover, the different prime elements of our free civil government as it now exists may be more or less directly traced to the working in church affairs of this principle of individual equality and self-control. The written constitution formed by the consultation of citizens in their representatives, and deriving all its authority, under God, from the consciences and wills of the people, is one such element. The first written constitution in the history of nations was, as Dr. Leonard Bacon has shown,[1] the direct offspring of the earliest Congregational churches of Connecticut. The preamble of this constitution declares, that, "where a people are gathered together, the Word of God requires, that, to maintain the peace and union of such a people, there should be an orderly and decent government according to God." To maintain "the discipline of the churches, which, according to the truth of said gospel, is now practised among us," is set forth as one principal intent of this constitution. The rights of civil self-government are thus derived from the same source from which are derived the rights of the self-government of individual Christians and of Christian churches.

The town-meeting is another prime factor in our civil free government. The town-meeting was, however, primarily modelled after the church-meeting; not unfre-

[1] Centennial Papers of the General Conference of Connecticut, p. 150, f.

quently it was only the church-meeting with its face turned toward civil affairs. "The town corporation," declares Dr. Joseph S. Clark,[1] "is the offspring of Puritan Congregationalism." It is to be traced to the polity of our fathers, who uniformly adapted the new plantation on a grant of land to the size suitable for common public worship of the inhabitants. These small free republics are the germinal elements out of which grew, both in idea and in fact, the greater republics, and the common republican government which now covers them all.

The element of popular suffrage is another prime element of our free civil state. But "it is an unquestionable fact," says the same author just quoted, "that the right of popular suffrage found its way to these shores from the north of England, through Holland, in Mr. Robinson's congregation, and crept into our civil government through the pre-established usage of the Congregational churches."[2]

We must also duly notice the fact that the writings and preaching of Congregational pastors in New England, as well as their influence upon magistrates and people in other ways, were of momentous influence in the securing and development of civil freedom. A sermon preached by Thomas Hooker as early as May 31, 1638, and deciphered from obscure notes not many years since, furnishes, according to Dr. Bacon,[3] "the earliest known suggestion of a fundamental law enacted not by royal charter, nor by concession from any previously existing government, but by the people themselves, — a primary and supreme law by which the government

[1] Historical Sketch of Congregational Churches in Massachusetts, p. 56.

[2] Ibid., p. 12, f. See, also, Baylie's Historical Memoir, I. 30.

[3] Centennial Papers of the General Conference of Connecticut, p. 152.

is constituted, and which not only provides for the free choice of magistrates by the people, but also 'sets the bounds and limitations of the power and place' to which each magistrate is called." This same Congregational pastor instituted in Connecticut such a system of state policy and laws as commanded admiration in England. In Massachusetts, for more than fifty years, John Cotton's "Judicials" and Nathaniel Ward's "Body of Liberties" constituted the only civil code. The "Vindication of the Government of New-England churches," by Rev. John Wise, "Pastor to a Church in Ipswich," was used as a political text-book in the struggle for civil freedom;[1] and some of the most glittering sentences of the Declaration of Independence seem like echoes from this work of the Ipswich pastor. The election-sermons by Congregational ministers were, down to the close of the war of the Revolution, clear, convincing, and effective applications of the principles of religion and of their church order to affairs of civil government. They were often printed in large editions, and distributed among the people as *quasi* state-documents. What fidelity some of these sermons displayed, we may judge from a somewhat late example. John Barnard, pastor of a church in Andover, preached the election-sermon before his Excellency William Shirley, Governor, and the other assembled notables, May 28, 1746.[2] To these worthies the bold preacher does not hesitate to present point blank these and similar pertinent inquiries: "Are those so fit to govern others who don't govern their passions and ap-

[1] See Historical Sketch of Congregational Churches in Massachusetts, p. 120.

[2] Printed by John Draper, printer to His Excellency the Governour and Council, for Daniel Gookin, over against the Old-South Meeting-house. Volume in the library of the Maine Historical Society.

petites?" "Is an epicure or debauchee a meet person to be a senator?" "Is it not to be wished that all who sit at this honorable board might be of a religious character?"

How faithfully these officers of Congregational churches were consulted in important state affairs, and how closely followed their advice generally was, no one familiar with the history need be informed. Their opinion, however, was influential for its reasons, not officially dictatorial. John Cotton was largely influential in all the civil affairs of his Colony; and yet, when he, in a sermon before the General Court, tried to secure the re-election of Winthrop as governor, on the dangerous principle that the office belongs during good behavior to the office-holder, the people turned out Winthrop, and put in Dudley. With equally good effect in illustrating the falsity of their own principles have other ministers tried to preach candidates into their offices. In the war of the Revolution the preaching of Congregational pastors was no small contribution to the cause of civil liberty.[1] The opinion of the elder Adams is said to have been expressed to a French statesman, that American independence was mainly due to the clergy; that is, to the Congregational ministers of New England. Nor was the cause of civil liberty, both in earlier times and in the War for Independence, represented by the clergy in sermons and prayers alone. They were fined and went to jail for the public teaching of the principles of freedom. They even fought as well as preached, and gave gunpowder as well as inflammatory addresses. I need not mention the amazing and

[1] See, for examples, the Essay of Rev. William C. Fowler on the Ministers of Connecticut in the Revolution, Centennial Papers, pp. 1-144.

ludicrous courage of Dr. Daggett, who rode his ancient black mare furiously to battle as he went, fowling-piece in hand, alone to oppose a column of twenty-five hundred British soldiers. The annals written for this purpose have recorded not a few instances of equally genuine and wiser courage in Congregational pastors. We may readily believe that the ministers of New England were "not parasites on the body politic." We may even refrain from dissent to the sweeping declaration of Dr. Leavitt, when he goes so far as to say, "The Puritan Congregationalists have been the means, under God, of nearly all the civil and religious liberty in the world."[1] Certain it is, that whatever contributions they made to the world's civil liberty they made out of the treasury of principles of liberty in the Church state accumulated for all the Lord's people. As the freemen of the Lord, having a voice in all the affairs of the Church, they proposed so to organize the State as to have a voice there also, and, having once gained that position in the State, they proposed to retain and defend it.[2]

Nor has the service of this principle of our church order, which cultivates the spirit of a reasonable individualism, been wanting to the cause of reform in civil iniquities. When we learn that the motion made in 1788 by the Association of the Western District of New-Haven County, declaring the slave-trade to be unjust, and calling for its abolition by law, preceded the year in which the State of Connecticut actually enacted laws for its abolition, we have an indication of the course of this entire reform. How unjust the charge would be that Congregational pastors and churches in

[1] Christian Spectator, 1832, p. 377.
[2] See Congregational Tracts, No. II., p. 1.

general stood in the way of the antislavery movement, may be abundantly proved.[1] The same impulse to move the disinthralling of men has, in general, incited our Congregational pastors and churches to use their influence as citizens in favor of the so-called temperance reform. The early course of this reform in Connecticut is traced somewhat in detail in a volume of Contributions to the Ecclesiastical History of that State. The sermon of Rev. Ebenezer Porter, preached in 1806, made the first profound impression upon the public mind. Roused by this sermon, the South Association of Litchfield County appointed a committee to report a remedy for the evil of intemperance. In 1812 the Fairfield West Association issued a temperance address to its ministers and churches: on the 13th of October in that year, they, the first of all ecclesiastical bodies to adopt this measure, resolved, "that the customary use of ardent spirits shall be wholly discontinued from this hour." In 1826 the six memorable sermons of Lyman Beecher were delivered in Litchfield, Conn. In 1827 the General Association placed itself upon record as to this reform. The earliest and most efficient county temperance society in the State was organized Sept. 2, 1828, in the Congregational church at Haddam. The State Temperance Society had as its first president Dr. Jeremiah Day, President of Yale College; and Congregational clergymen were its first chairman of the executive committee, and corresponding secretary. Of a list of about forty most notable temperance publications issued in this State between the years 1806 and 1840, the great majority are by the pens of Congregational pastors. It is doubtful whether the narrative of the reform of

[1] See Contributions to Ecclesiastical History of Connecticut, p. 58, f, and art. of Dr. Cushing in Congregational Quarterly, 1876, pp. 550, ff.

the intemperate in other New-England States would be notably unlike that in Connecticut.

In general, and in all places, the adherents of Congregational principles have been among the foremost to act as Christian citizens for the remedying of public wrongs and for the reforming of public morals. And the very point to be noticed in this connection lies in the truth that this prompt and efficient activity is the direct outgrowth of the effort to apply the principles of a true church polity to the citizenship of the members of the churches. Of those principles, the one which affirms the exclusive rulership of Jesus Christ over his churches, and the one which places every individual under that rulership upon a platform of equality and self-control with every other, have exercised directest and most potent influence over the welfare of man in civil life. They have done much to secure the liberties both of the churches and of the people at large. The former principle provides that every person and every church shall, in the formation and expression of religious belief, and in the enjoyment of religious services, be free from governmental control. It provides also, that churches shall not themselves so far usurp the authority of Jesus Christ as to try by the civil arm, either to control other churches, or to force their own religious opinions and forms of worship upon the communities in which they are planted. The experience of our fathers shows also the weakness and inefficiency of an effort to construct a state out of the churches for the exercise of such authority over men as belongs only to Christ. The second principle stimulates and encourages every man in the endeavor to stand, both in the Church and in the State, beside every fellow-man, as alike entitled to the powers and privileges of a freeman: it also obligates

each one to concede to every other the powers and privileges which he claims for himself. It is largely under the influences from these religious principles, that modern society, especially in England and America, has been permeated with the ideas and spirit of civil freedom.

We close this discussion with certain suggestions as to fit conduct in Congregational pastors which have been made prominent by our theme.

Congregational pastors should be especially careful not to give to the people the impression that they are allied with aristocratic ideas and movements in history. To seem to be a partisan of any class injures the influence of any Christian pastor. Demagogism is peculiarly despicable in a minister. Few ministers, however, in our churches, have practised demagogism, or suffered from its just reproaches. Few have even been suspected of it. But Congregational churches and their pastors have suffered, not unfrequently, from the too plausible suspicion of being over-aristocratic. For some time in New England they comprised and constituted nearly all the aristocracy. The citizenship, the honors, the control, the offices, were in their hands. It has been said that in Connecticut, "every Governor in either Colony before the Union, and afterwards every Governor in the united Colony, down to the year 1811, was in his own town a member of the Congregational church in full communion." [1] The facts were similar in all the New-England States. There can be little doubt that no other so good governors were likely at these times to be found in New England outside of Congregational churches. There can be as little doubt that during these times the aristocratic position of these churches was separating

[1] Centennial Papers of the General Conference of Connecticut, p. 165.

them from the growing multitudes of the so-called lower orders of the people. Now, no order of Christian churches can rightly or safely be separated from the sympathies of the common people. I regard it as especially important in these days to have the multitudes in all places know that the pastors of our churches feel with them in every right feeling, and feel for them in their suffering of every wrong. In this great strife of classes which is going on, both the upper and the lower have their grievous faults. A selfish heart is the same under fustian or velvet. But the people have suffered much in the world's past: they are surely coming to the front in the world's future. And for them Christ died. They are blind and blundering; but they learn to heed sound advice, and to know their friends. The pastor of every Congregational church should be known as the genuine and wise friend and brother-citizen of the poorer people. His due gravity of manners should not need to appear to them as austerity: his recoil from vulgarity and impurity should not be suspected of the vulgarity of self-esteem, the impurity of uncharitableness.

Moreover, the Congregational pastor should be a brave, alert, strenuous, and pure-minded citizen. He may wear a white neckcloth; but it must not keep him from the smudge of the caucus and the polls. To turn political trickster would be to cheat himself out of the valuable position of a pure and upright Christian teacher; but to be a man among men, a citizen among fellow-citizens, he is in duty bound. Some of the casuistry of evangelistic preaching has recently been directed toward causing the Christian, and especially the preacher, to withdraw as completely as possible from this wholly vain and perishing world, with all its concerns, com-

mercial and political. Yes, let the pastor withdraw his spirit from the world of selfish spirits, and especially from that spirit of religious self-indulgence and ease, or that spirit of aloofness from needy causes and smutty souls, which is characteristic of a *semi* and *quasi* rather than a genuine devotion to Christ. Where public wrong is to be righted, where crimes in high places are to be rebuked, where the struggle of good citizens against the vile is to be encouraged, there, in due seasons and opportunities, is the Congregational pastor's place. This is, with Congregationalism, the traditional province of the Christian minister; and he is to occupy his province, even if it cost him fines and imprisonment, as well as jeering and abuse. Rev. John Wise was in jail twenty-one days, was then fined fifty dollars and suspended from the ministerial function, all — to give his own account — because he "made a speech and said that we had a good God, and a good king, and should do well to stand to our privileges." A severe penalty for a mild crime was this; yet the entire proceeding on the reverend gentleman's part was apparently conducted on Congregational principles.

Especially should Congregational pastors believe and teach that the principles of sound government are in true religion. Now, as under Mosaism, the eternal principle is true, that righteousness exalteth a nation. The French sociologist, Le Play, announces that a scientific induction from facts of personal observation, which he spent years in gathering, establishes the conclusion, the basis of national prosperity is in righteousness. One of the Puritans would have sworn to the principle as taught by the Bible, and would have defended it by his sword, without need of tedious observations and induction. It is just this truth which only

a part of the people, and scarcely any of the politicians, now really believe. But it is, in part, the duty of the religious teachers of both people and politicians to keep this truth before their minds. We are ruined, churches and all else together, if we permanently depart as citizens from this truth. He who tries to keep his little congregation as "a garden walled around," unmindful of the approach of the prairie-fire or the slower encroachments of the Canada thistle in the outlying domain, minimizes his influence, and magnifies his dangers. This has never been the polity of Congregationalism. It has made ministers, who, like Thomas Hooker, could put a king in their pockets. It has transformed nations, and breathed the breath of civil and religious freedom into the fainting and dying peoples. And its ancient spirit is not yet dead. We shall never cease as citizens to be in contest with political evils, until "that old serpent called the devil" is "cast out," and "his angels are cast out with him," and until the voice is heard saying of earth as well as heaven, "Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ."

LECTURE V.

THE FORMAL PRINCIPLE OF CONGREGATIONALISM.

In the treatment of our general theme we have arrived at the second of the three main divisions in which it was proposed to discuss certain applications of the principles of the true Church Polity as those principles were analyzed and enunciated in the First Lecture of this Course. The fitness of these principles to man as a rational soul, as a social being, and as a member of civil government, has already been discussed. We now inquire in what manner and degree these same principles are adapted to conserve the purity, and unfold in ever-nearer approaches to absolute perfection the symmetry, of our common Christian faith. The inquiry will demand the most careful attention, and warmest, most discriminating interest, of both listeners and lecturer. Mooted and difficult questions — questions which have divided and do still divide the opinions of authorities and the practices of our churches, and which have excited and do still excite no small amount of passion and of passionate debate — must be either touched in passing, or seized and handled with a firm grasp. We shall do well, not only in reference to the present discussion, but also in reference to all similar discussion in subsequent life, if we learn to look calmly at the truth, without fear, or prejudice, or haste.

In preparation of the spirit for such discussion we may keep before our minds these following truths.

The most mooted and most difficult of these questions are by no means new. Our church order, like all vital and growing institutions, has to make perpetual effort to re-adjust itself to changes in circumstances, and, in the effort at re-adjustment, to make new applications of its principles and fundamental laws. By its very nature it is not a finished product. It ought not, therefore, to be laid upon the shelf as a somewhat demanding no further energy of thought or warmth of feeling. Certain questions have been debated from the very beginning by Congregational churches. They have not yet arrived at a settlement: they are still in process of settlement. The more strictly Independent, the more purely Congregational, and the more rigidly Presbyterian view of many of the questions of polity, the more technically orthodox, the more freely tentative, and the more genuinely liberal view of many of the questions of doctrine, have existed and striven together, in differing phases of commixture, from the beginning until now.

But the continued life and enlarging growth of Congregationalism are not primarily dependent upon the immediate settlement, in one way or another, of these mooted questions of polity and doctrine. Life and growth are not dependent upon details and technicalities of form. The wail has come up from underneath the walls of our Zion again and again, that the very walls were leaning over toward Babylon, or tottering to their fall clean down into the Valley of Gehenna. Oftentimes the illusion has been due to the fact that the men who made the outcry fancied themselves, with all their views of Congregationalism, built into the very

walls: as their brains reeled, the walls, therefore, fell. The interference of the secular arm and the non-interference of that arm; the "Babel" of Independency and the "Babylon" of Presbyterianizing; the associating of ministers and consociating of churches on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the refusal of other ministers to associate, and of other churches to consociate; the terrors of ruling elders and the abolition of the office of ruling elders; the too frequent calling of mutual councils and the refusal to call any councils; contempt of councils actual, and actually contemptible councils; the use of lay ordination and the substitution of clerical for lay ordination; the failure to organize a National Council and the National Council when organized; the lack of a great and awe-inspiring creed and the proposal to create an awful and unbearable bondage of a general creed, — all these and many other causes of the ills borne by our church order have been frequently assigned. Our own doctors have often gravely declared our diseases mortal: under their consignment we have already died a hundred deaths. But the truth has been, and is, and will remain, that all *these* things are of subordinate importance. We shall really thrive according as, both in polity and doctrine, we cling by the Head, and in the spirit of Christ do our positive work as Christian churches. We have failed to thrive more, because we have not had enough of love for men, of apostolic zeal, of charity toward our brethren, of devotion to the Master.

These questions are, indeed, not to be counted trivial, or unworthy of regard. They are never to be exalted, however, to prime importance. They are not to be discussed so as to separate brethren, but rather so as to unite them in the manifestation of zeal and love.

The things which they concern are forms of manifesting the life. The life must have a manifestation; but the life is more than any one of its manifested forms.

The following five Lectures will comprise the second main division of our theme. We shall make the effort to apply the principles already set forth: (1) to the faith required for membership in the local Congregational church; (2) to the purity in the faith of Congregational ministers; (3) to the communion of Congregational churches in matters of their common faith.

The formal principle of the true church polity requires that we shall regard the Word of God in the Scripture as giving to Christian churches their rule of faith, and this not only with reference to the doctrines which they shall hold, but also with reference to the forms according to which they shall institute and manage ecclesiastical affairs. We consider, then, in this Lecture certain features of this formal principle. We consider, that is, the doctrine of the Scriptures as giving the rule of faith and discipline. We can indeed scarcely speak of any definite expression of this doctrine as being distinctively Congregational. In what sense and manner the Scriptures contain and furnish the rule of faith is a question, which, in all its details, has never been satisfactorily answered by the Christian Church. Congregationalism has displayed no distinctive and thoroughly well formulated statement of the doctrine. Certain phases and tendencies of belief are, however, of Protestant origin and Protestant characteristics. Certain minuter phases and obscurer tendencies are perhaps to be spoken of as showing to some extent the characteristics of Congregationalism. In fact, our church order has most fostered a certain way of using the Scriptures as giving the rule of faith. In

theory, this order bases itself upon the assumption that a certain form of this doctrine is alone valid: this order also proceeds to prove that this valid form should serve as a basis for the constitution and discipline of Christian churches.

We should not, then, I repeat, venture to speak of a distinctively Congregational doctrine of Sacred Scripture, understanding by these words a doctrine which has been formulated by authorities in theology, and from them accepted by the churches. We shall show, however, that Congregationalism has, with more or less of self-conscious recognition of its own attitude, developed in partial form a distinctive phase of the general doctrine.

Only the rudiments or temporary manifestations of the formal principle of Congregationalism are to be found in the history of the Church, from the time when Romanism first established itself down to the time when the movement began in England for the establishment of Christ's churches according to the order of the New Testament. Dr. Leonard Bacon[1] rightly regards the proposal which Francis Lambert made to Philip of Hesse, to establish a church polity upon the principles of the New Testament, as manifesting the presence of the Congregational idea, in 1526, in Germany. This proposal tested itself in respect to form, to reasonableness, and to obligation, by the Word of God in Scripture. It may therefore be said to constitute the earliest recognition, after the Reformation began, of this formal principle. In England, the Articles of Faith promulgated about Michaelmas, 1536, although they taught

[1] Genesis of the New-England Churches, p. 53, f. A Life of this reformer has been written by J. W. Baum, entitled Franz Lambert of Avignon, Strassburg, 1840. "He was a most remarkable man," says Kurtz, Church History, II. § 7. 2.

the doctrine of transubstantiation, and retained auricular confession, and the worship of saints and images, nevertheless recognized the Holy Scriptures as the standard of appeal without reference to tradition or the papal decrees. "Bishop Burnet tells us," says Prince,[1] "that, by King Henry's order, he (Lord Cromwell) declares it was the King's pleasure that the rites and ceremonies of the Church should be reformed by the rules of Scripture, and that nothing was to be maintained which did not rest upon that authority." "Now this," adds Mr. Prince, "is the grand principle of Puritanism; . . . and, had the governors of the Church adhered strictly to this one principle, . . . the whole Church had then been Puritan." All this was, however, vitiated both in theory and in fact by the previous Act of 1534, which had conferred upon the King the right of final decision in matters of doctrine. All the blindness and spite of the worst persecution in the most Catholic countries were brought to bear against those who dissented from the royal Confession of Faith, the Six Articles of June, 1539. Tyndale's translation of the Bible was first prohibited by royal edict, and in 1543 even the reading of the version formerly authorized and commended by the King was denied to the common people.[2]

That the Protestant churches on the Continent of Europe have never fully recognized this formal principle of the true church polity was indicated in a previous Lecture. Guerike, indeed, claims that "the Word of God, the Word of God alone," is the formal principle of the Lutheran Church. From this principle this author

[1] New-England Chronology, p. 283.
[2] Burnet, London, 1825, vol. I. p. 414.

accuses[1] both the Roman-Catholic Church and the Reformed Churches of departing widely, although in diverse lines of departure. The Roman-Catholic doctrine refuses to receive the Word of God in the Scripture as alone giving the rule of faith, and co-ordinates with it tradition as a peer in its authority. But the doctrine of the Reformed Churches (and among these, no doubt Guerike would most emphatically place the Congregational churches) has in his opinion erred in making "the meaning of the divine Word actually dependent upon the comprehension or non-comprehension of the human reason:" it "has, in fact, made reason judge over the Divine Word;" it has accepted "the principle of subordinating the word and the letter to the so-called spirit," and has thus introduced into the Church a "spirit-proud idealism." Substantially the same charges against the Reformed Churches does Rudelbach make in his celebrated articles on the Doctrine of Inspiration.[2] According to Rudelbach, "the principles of a false spiritualism and the application of rational principles as co-ordinately determining the contents of faith," have obscured the doctrine of inspiration in the Reformed Churches. Calvin and Beza, in the opinion of these Lutheran theologians, taught this heresy. Richard Baxter led astray after him by use of this false principle the majority of English theologians. These advocates of Lutheranism adduce a number of instances of such false doctrine from the theological authors and symbols of the Reformed Churches. Rudelbach is even forced to lament, that although the Lutheran doctrine upon the Bible as furnishing the rule of faith remains unques-

[1] See article in Zeitschrift für die gesammte Luth. Theologie, 1840, erstes quartelheft.

[2] See the same Zeitschrift, same year, erstes and zweites quartelheft.

tionably orthodox, yet as a matter of fact almost all the Lutheran doctors have abandoned the doctrine. The admission helps to convince us of the truthfulness and advantage of another view of Sacred Scripture.

After making certain corrections of language, we are quite ready to admit the substantial truth of the charges made by these theologians, as applying to Congregationalism, which may be regarded as in some sort leading the advanced line of the Reformed Churches. The Congregational doctrine does not make the Word of God in Scripture dependent upon the comprehension of reason; it does not make reason judge *over* this Word; it does not subordinate the Word to the so-called Spirit. Its "spiritualism" is not "false:" the Holy Ghost, whom it accepts as divine teacher, is not a "so-called spirit." This doctrine does, however, in a certain true significance of the words, co-ordinate reason with Scripture, and subordinate the letter to the spirit. The formal principle of Congregationalism must make itself defensible by reason: this it does to a large degree by uniting itself with the material principle. And how, we will begin by inquiring, is the formal principle of either Lutheranism or Congregationalism to erect itself at all into the place of an acknowledged principle, if it fly up in the face of the very facts and ideas of redeemed humanity upon which it must rather take its stand? Understanding by reason those higher rational and spiritual powers of humanity in which, when the soul is regenerated, the Holy Spirit delights to dwell, and which he uses as his organ, we are bound to declare, The claim of the Scripture itself to be the sole objective authority is derived from the historic fact that it is a gift of God in and through reason, is tested by reason, maintained by reason, is united in the last

analysis with the claim to authority of reason itself. To erect a view of the Bible which does not acknowledge this is to build a house divided against itself. The union of the sanctified reason and the Sacred Scripture, of the divine Word subjective and the divine Word objective, is the primal and essential element in the formal principle. We do not, indeed, reply to those who object to our understanding of Scripture — to use the illustration of Rudelbach — after the fashion of Luther in his debate upon the bodily presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. We respect the claims of the human reason: we regard the Christian consciousness as furnishing, in some sense, a co-ordinate revelation of the mind of Jesus Christ.

We are not loath, then, to cite, in proof of this position, certain quotations made by Guerike and Rudelbach, and even to add others of our own. The essential unity of Scripture and reason is the doctrine necessarily formed by blending the formal and the material principles.

"What is heard," says Zwingle, "is not the very word which we believe. . . . We are rendered believers by that word which the heavenly Father preaches in our hearts, by which at the same time he illumines us that we may understand, and draws us that we may follow." And Œcolampadius speaks of an inner and an outward word which are as far from one another as are the law and grace. Calvin also declares,[1] "For we ought to understand the *word*, not of a murmur uttered without any meaning or faith, . . . but of the gospel preached, which instructs us in the signification of the visible sign." These declarations are offensive and heretical in the sight of those who virtually deny

[1] Institutes, IV. xiv. 4.

that "the immediateness and fulness of that relation which exists between the spirit of Christ and the church of Christ extends to every congregation of true Christians and to the soul of every individual true believer." But this is, as we have already seen, a fixed principle in a true church polity.

It is not surprising, then, to find the unity of sanctified reason and Sacred Scripture, as giving the rule of faith, virtually asserted by many writers in our church order, although formulated into an article of their creed by none. "God, who made two great lights for the bodily eye," said John Robinson, "hath also made two lights for the eye of the mind: the one, the Scriptures, for her supernatural light; the other, reason, for her natural light."[1] "As to ecclesiastical matters," says Prince, in speaking of Robinson and his church, "they held the following articles to be agreeable to *Scripture and reason*."[2] The same thought is advanced by Owen when he declares,[3] that to take the attitude demanded by Romanism toward the errors of the Church is to "renounce our sense and reason, with all that understanding which we have, or at least are fully convinced that we have, of the mind of God in the Scripture." But in the other view, which is advocated by Guerike and Rudelbach, and which is intended at once to place the hand of church authority over the mouth whenever reason cries out against churchly interpretations of the divine Word, it is heretical to oppose the apparent meaning of the letter of Scripture by bringing forward known impossibilities of matter and mind, or even by appealing to clear convictions of the Christian con-

[1] Essay on Authority and Reason.
[2] New-England Chronology, p. 177. The Italics are ours.
[3] Works, XIII., p. 97.

sciousness. For example, when the church doctrine asserts the real presence of the body of Christ in the Holy Supper, we can only bow our heads before the doctrine; so, also, with sacramental regeneration and even the infallibility of the Bible itself. We may, perhaps, examine the text anew, to see whether it still read, *hoc est meum corpus*, or *τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου*. But we must not argue, no matter how sincerely and reverently, your interpretation cannot be correct, for the same divine Logos who made the world spoke in Jesus Christ, and HE has made it to be true, "*Proprietas physica humani corporis est esse in loco.*" There are, however, some things of which we may say, as John Wise[1] says of natural liberty, "And certainly it is agreeable that we attribute it to God, whether we receive it nextly from reason or revelation; for that each is equally an emanation of his wisdom (Prov. xx. 27). The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly. There be many larger volumes in this dark recess called the belly, to be read by that candle God has lighted up." The same author does not hesitate to speak of reason as congregate with the nature of man, — "a law immutable, instampt upon his frame." Surely nothing in Calvin, Zwingle, or Baxter, could so shock our Lutheran theologians as this.

A correct view of the two fundamental principles of the true church polity in their mutual relations compels us to assert that a true doctrine of Scripture, as giving the rule of faith, must insist upon the essential unity of reason and the Word of God in Scripture. The spiritually illumined Christian consciousness, and the verbal statement of things uttered by holy men of old as

[1] Vindication, pp. 21, 23.

they were moved by the Holy Ghost, are in substantial accord. The Word of God in the biblical books cannot be contradictory of reason. This Word was originally the divine truth revealed in and through the divinely illumined reason of God's children. The present illumining of the reason of his children fits them to apprehend and appropriate this objective word. The spiritualized reason in the soul meets the historical and actualized work of the reason of God in the Book of his Word. The call which comes to humanity from this formal principle when united with the material principle is never the summons, Let Reason abjure her throne: it is, rather, Let Reason be divinely illumined so as to recognize her accord with the divine reason enthroned in the divine Word. We have no warrant for saying, We accept the Bible as giving the rule of faith and discipline, despite reason, or in neglect of reason. We say, rather, with Dr. Adam Clarke,[1] "In every question which involves the eternal interests of man, the Holy Scriptures must be appealed to in union with reason, their great commentator."

Nor must we be deceived by this speaking of reason as the great commentator of the Bible. The title does not imply that the only work of the divinely illumined Christian consciousness with reference to the Bible is to inquire formally, and as it were *ab extra*, what the Scriptures say, with a view to accept the traditional answer to this inquiry, however contrary it may appear to the so-called natural reason, or to the Christian consciousness, as a final and authoritative answer from the mind of God. Our doctrine implies an unwavering confidence that the true point of union for the Word of God in Scripture and the Word of God in the soul

[1] Commentary on the New Testament, last page.

of man may be found. It also obliges us to distinguish between the eternal Word of God in Scripture and the imperfect form in which that Word may be given. It, moreover, invites every reason to seek anew, and with new hope to find, this point of union. The abiding confidence of the believer who strives to interpret the Scriptures reasonably is, that, when thus interpreted, they will show their perfect accord with reason. The same Holy Spirit is in both the book and the soul. The book reveals the divine reason to the believing soul: the believing soul, by use of its divinely illumined reason, apprehends, discovers, appropriates, and tests the Word of God in the book.

We cannot, then, accept the formal principle of Congregationalism with the force which it receives from the material principle, and at the same time control by some human form of words the interpretation of Scripture. This would be no better than bringing in at the back door the wolf we had ejected from the front. Bishop Warburton, in giving an account of how, "by insensible degrees" "a very wicked usurpation of authority came about in the Christian Church," declares, "The ministers of the Word, under pretence of interpreting it, took occasion to introduce their own authority." "The business of interpreting was at first modestly assumed, as a mere act of charity, to assist the brethren in the study of God's Word." "All that infallibility," says Robert Hall, "which the Church of Rome pretends to is the right of placing her interpretation of Scripture on a level with the Word of God. She professes to promulgate no new revelation, but solely to render her sense of it binding." Rev. Ezra Stiles, afterward president of Yale College, laments that some in his day were "fond of substituting human interpretations given by

authority of councils and learned men, exacting that the Sacred Scriptures be understood according to senses fitted and defined in human tests."[1]

We conclude, then, that the formal principle of Congregationalism, when understood in harmony with the material principle, implies the belief in the unity of reason and the Word of God in Scripture; and that it invites all individuals and all churches, in this confidence of belief, to search the Bible for themselves, with the added confidence that the Christian consciousness, unbound by traditional interpretations and formulatings of Scripture, is to make ever new discoveries within, and ever nearer approaches to complete understanding of, this everlasting Word of God.

We are now prepared to understand, in both positive and negative form, what is meant by asserting that the Word of God in the Scripture is our *sole objective authority*. It *is* our authority, and we have *no other objective* authority. The Bible does indeed give, with acknowledged power to obligate, the rule of faith and discipline to the churches of Christ. Human creeds and forms of words and institutions do not with authority give this rule. They are helps to the enlightened Christian consciousness in arriving, by the understanding of Scripture, at such a rule. And in speaking of the Bible as furnishing our *sole* authority, we do not deny the power of divinely illumined reason to test and apprehend the true Word of God: we rather express our confidence that its testing approbates the truths of the Bible; that its apprehending proves the divine quality of that which it apprehends. We co-ordinate, in some sense, as Guerike and Rudelbach have charged the Reformed Churches

[1] See his remarkable Discourse on Christian Union, delivered in 1760.

with doing, the Word subjective and the Word objective. In doing this we do not appeal the case to two rival courts, where two judges are likely to give conflicting decisions; but by two vestibules, or doors of entry, we take our appeal to one court, where one Judge, even the Eternal Spirit of all truth, sits always enthroned. We acknowledge that not only popes and priests and presbyters and learned doctors, not only councils and synods and assemblies, but that all humblest believers, and every most insignificant congregation of believers, have also this right of appeal. And we further acknowledge, that the appeal may be made again and again, for the court is always sitting; and that it must be made again and again, for the decisions of the court have not, as yet, all been rendered.

The positive form of this principle has certainly had a characteristic influence upon the doctrine and discipline of Congregational churches. From the beginning until now, Congregationalists have retained their confidence in the Bible as able to give, and as actually giving, the perfect rule of faith and discipline. They have retained this confidence in much more healthful and symmetrical form than those churches which have complained of their looseness of doctrine. We cannot forget that in the Westminster Assembly, while Thomas Goodwin and his coadjutors had both eyes honestly intent upon the Bible, and wished to settle all disputed questions by fair reasoning upon what they saw therein, Commissioner Robert Baillie and the other Scotch advocates of National Presbyterianism kept at least all of one eye intent upon the Scotch army, to the impress of whose carnal power they were looking for an effect favorable to Scotch Presbyterianism. Nor can we avoid the suspicion that those who do not like to have

reason exercise itself freely with testing or interpreting Scripture frequently desire virtually to take the appeal before some much less trustworthy and respectable tribunal.

As to the fact that Congregationalism has made for both its doctrines and institutions an honest research of and hearty appeal to the authority of the Scriptures, I need bring little proof in addition to that introduced in the first Lecture. We may see the disposition and practice of the founders of our church order illustrated in the fact that the first synod ever held in New England, the synod of Newton (afterwards called Cambridge) in 1637, drew up its decisions in such form as to follow the statement of each particular Antinomian error with the judgment, We find this contrary to such and such a text of Scripture. The motion of the General Court convening the synod of Cambridge calls upon that body to "discuss, dispute, and clear up by the Word of God" . . . and "to continue so doing, till they, or the major part of them, shall have agreed upon one form . . . as that which they judge agreeable to the Holy Scriptures." We may note also the pains taken by the synod of 1662 to confirm by the Scriptures its decisions respecting the questions of the Half-way Covenant. The noble words of the Saybrook fathers, especially when contrasted with the views then prevalent in Christendom, are expansive enough to serve the exigencies of all time: "That you be immovably and unchangeably agreed in the only sufficient and invariable rule of religion, which is the Holy Scriptures. You ought to account nothing *ancient* that will not stand by this rule, and nothing modern that will."[1] The Saybrook Confession of Faith[2] admits both the for-

[1] See Contributions to Ecclesiastical History of Connecticut, p. 76.
[2] Chaps. I., VI.

mal and the material principles in the following terms: "The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture; unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the world."

The phrase just quoted, which asserts that nothing is at any time to be added, "whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men," brings before our view what I have called the negative side of the formal principle of Congregationalism. The Scriptures contain the *sole* objective authority for the rule of faith and discipline. Placing the emphasis thus, we arrive at an understanding of the attitude of our church order towards symbols, creeds, and confessions of faith. The common-law principle conserves all these as well as all other choice fruits of the experience of the Church of Christ. It conserves them as helps to an understanding of the sole authority, not as authorities themselves. They are, indeed, all of them, in some degree, manifestations of the same divine Spirit who is made known through the Bible and in the Christian consciousness. But they are manifestations as fragments of truth, as progressive approaches to the perfect manifestation of truth. The application of the formal principle to the doctrine of the nature and uses of creeds, confessions of faith, and symbols, requires that we shall in no case consider or put forward such forms of words, either as sources of doctrine, or as authoritative statements of

doctrine, or as final tests of orthodoxy, or as fences fixedly to limit the bounds of Christian communion. In other words, the Bible is in all these considerations, and for all these uses, the sole objective authority of Congregational churches. Creeds, confessions of faith, and symbols may be considered, and should be used, as helps to right doctrine, and as channels of communicating it from its source through the Christian consciousness. They afford secondary and subordinate means of testing orthodoxy, and fixing the limits of Christian communion. But the help may be itself helped; the channel may be mended, and connected anew with its source. The means of testing are themselves to be tested: the limits are not themselves immovably fixed.

The attitude of freedom toward creeds is traditional and principled in our church order. This statement leads us briefly to examine those celebrated words, ascribed, on the authority of Gov. Winslow's memory, to John Robinson, in which he expressed his confidence that "the Lord had more light and truth yet to break forth out of his Holy Word." On the one hand, these words have been restricted so as to make Mr. Robinson's confidence in the breaking-forth of more light and truth extend only to certain probable improvements in church polity. On the other hand, this restriction has been called by Dr. J. P. Thompson "a caricature of these noble sentiments."[1] On the one hand, and as a matter of fact, it must be admitted that Robinson, and, following him, the New-England Congregationalists generally, had no fault to find with the symbols of the Reformed Churches as statements of the rule of faith. "As to faith and the holy sacraments," says Prince in this very connection,[2] "they believed the doctrinal

[1] See Article in New-Englander, August, 1860, p. 334.
[2] New-England Chronology, p. 177.

articles of the Church of England, as also of the Reformed Churches of Scotland, Ireland, France, the Palatinate, Geneva, Switzerland, and the United Provinces, to be agreeable to the holy oracles, . . . differing from them only in matters purely ecclesiastical." The very men who drew up that full statement of the doctrine of church discipline which is called the Cambridge Platform declare in their Preface that they "believe and profess the same doctrine of the truth of the gospel which generally is received in all the Reformed Churches of Christ in Europe;" and, finding the "sum and substance" of the Westminster Confession to express their judgment, they "freely and fully consent thereunto for the substance thereof," and commend this confession to the churches. This Westminster Confession, together with that of Savoy, the framers of the Saybrook Confession of Faith declare to be "most worthy of repute and acceptance." The Savoy Confession, already owned and consented unto by the Synod of 1680, the Saybrook fathers commended to the General Assembly of the Colony of Connecticut, to be approved and established by them.

But, on the other hand, with what understanding, and in what way, did John Robinson and the framers of these great historic papers of our church order accept all these different creeds? Let us, for an answer, recur to the words of Prince. We note, that, in his opinion, Robinson and his followers believed these doctrinal articles "*to be agreeable to the holy oracles.*" It was, then, because the creeds could bear the testing of Scripture, and as always subject to this testing, that these men accepted the creeds. And they accepted all of them, from Ireland to the United Provinces, and from Scotland to Switzerland: they believed the doctrinal

articles of the Church of England as well as those of the Reformed Churches. This is surely a catholic spirit, and one very different from that which limits communion to the standards of a denomination or sect. But how could they have accepted all these creeds without distinguishing between those great articles of faith which they all had in common, and those minor but erroneous articles which some of them, as, for instance, the Church of England, not only then had, but also have retained to this day? Plainly it is for substance of doctrine, with a liberal interpretation of the phrase, that Prince hands in the adherence of the Leyden Congregationalists to so many of the creeds of Christendom. But what, in the opinion of Prince, was the thought of Robinson as he spoke his entire confidence that "the Lord had more light and truth to break forth out of his Holy Word"? Surely it was the thought of a free and full research by the individual Christian into the Bible for *every kind of truth* to be discovered there. This is apparent when we consider the intent of the author in quoting the words which tradition imputed to Robinson. Prince is engaged in proving that the pastor of Leyden and his people were not rigid Separatists, or Brownists. Hornius had called them Robinsonians. But so generous were their principles, that they would have refused to be called after the name of any man; "since" — and mark the absolute universality of this declaration — "they renounced *all* attachment to *any* mere human systems, or expositions of the Scripture, and reserved an *entire* and *perpetual* liberty of searching the inspired records, and of forming *both* their *principles* and practice from those discoveries they should make therein."[1] Now, no more unqualified and sweep-

[1] The Italics are ours; but they only bring out fairly and clearly the thought of the author.

ing statement than this could possibly be made. All the "mere human systems and expositions of Scripture" referred to in this declaration contained mainly articles of faith and statements of doctrine; but Robinson and his people, according to Prince, renounced "all attachment" to them all. They in principle rejected the authority of every creed; though in fact, and for substance of doctrine, they believed a great number of creeds. They claimed and conceded the right of every believer to resort, untrammelled by creeds, to the Holy Word, and to find, as one taught by the Spirit within, what the Spirit had previously taught in this recorded Word. They could not, then, without distrust of the breadth and magnanimity of the Word of God, or without great arrogance of pride, suppose that they themselves, or any other Christians, or all other Christians combined, had found and received and stated in creeds the entire truth of God, either with respect to faith or discipline. It is in proof of this sweeping statement of his own, that Prince cites the well-known words of Robinson: we cannot doubt that Prince supposed them to have reference to the whole sphere of Christian truth. To the Bible as an ever fresh and perennial source of truth is the believer to resort; and the fact that he now agrees for substance of doctrine with the forms of words in which men have hitherto expressed the results of their researches of Scripture in no way limits the principle that these forms he is at liberty to test, to improve, to commend, to reject, according to what he himself finds in research of the same Scripture.

And if Robinson ever spoke the words ascribed to him, or words to the same effect, as we do not doubt he often did, we can scarcely hesitate as to their inter-

pretation. Robinson will not add a creed or a church, to be called after his name, to those already in existence. "He charged us, before God and his blessed angels, to follow him no further than he followed Christ." All truth, by whomsoever revealed, is to be received. Any other man might as well as himself be an instrument of the impartation of truth, and there is more truth still to come from its source in the Word of God. That this statement in the thought of Robinson himself might include the more strictly doctrinal truth, as well as that more strictly relating to the discipline of the Church, is manifest by the lament which accompanies his expression of confidence. Robinson is said to complain that "the Lutherans could not be drawn to go beyond what Luther saw." In respect to church order alone or chiefly? Was the complaint because the Lutherans would not turn Presbyterians, and follow the lead of Calvin in his discipline of the Church? Certainly not. It was because the Lutherans rejected all the improvements in doctrine of the Reformed Churches, and did this in blind adherence to a partisan creed and to the exalted name of a human leader. They would not examine to see whether new truth and light had not broken forth out of God's Word through Calvin. And as to the Calvinists, they had done little better: they were sticking where Calvin had left them. In respect to church order alone? Certainly not. In respect to their entire attitude toward all truth. The name and creed and church discipline of Calvin were a finality with them. But you, adds this venerated teacher, are not to be bound by names and creeds as ultimata of truth. By your church covenant you are "engaged with God and one another to receive *whatever* light or truth shall be made known to you from his written Word."

We notice, also, that the framers of the Cambridge Platform subscribe for sum and substance to the Westminster Confession; not that they may bar out from themselves heretics in their own land, but that they may manifest their real union in faith with their brethren in foreign lands.[1] Even the Saybrook fathers offer their Confession of Faith as their "firm persuasion, well and fully grounded upon the Holy Scripture;" and, not assuming that any thing should be taken upon trust from them, they exhort the people, in several heads of exhortation, to search the Scriptures, and to remember that the Word of God must be the foundation of their faith, and the authority of the Word the reason of it.[2]

Manifold other illustrations of the negative force of this formal principle of Congregationalism might be given. No formulas of doctrine, however composed by men of learning and authority, can be received as giving authoritatively the rule of faith and discipline. From this general statement of what the Scripture is, and what, therefore, the creeds are not, we may derive the following three particulars: —

The creed is in no sense a source of doctrine, or an instrument of authority. The creed is to be used for the expression and explication of doctrine, not primarily for its establishment. The right historical and philosophical use of symbols and confessions of faith in the formation of doctrinal systems is one of the most important acquisitions of theology. These all exhibit to the student of this science the growing development of Christian consciousness in its understanding of the Word of God. They are, so far as they are true, from

[1] Note the words of the Preface, beginning, "The more we discern," etc.; "For this end," etc.; and "Now by this our professed consent."

[2] See the Preface, "This Confession of Faith we offer," etc.

the same fountain, in the self-revelation of God, from which the Scriptures themselves are. The Scriptures are a source of doctrine such as the creeds cannot become; but the latter are channels for the distribution and manifestation of this doctrine.

The formulated rules of faith which the Church uses are never, therefore, completed expressions or final tests of the divine rule of faith. Changes in creeds, and improvements in statement of doctrine, are to be sought and expected. Changes are to be adopted whenever they are made clear to the Christian consciousness as real and helpful improvements coming out of the divine Word. The younger Edwards, in accordance with this application of the principle, could claim, that, "on the great subject of necessity and liberty, his father made very important improvements."

Every believer has, therefore, the right, and is under the obligation, to study, discern, promulgate, and defend the truths of the gospel. For these ends he may go himself to the Scriptures, and from them form, in humble and prayerful dependence upon the Holy Spirit, his views of divine truth. "Every man," says Prince,[1] "has a right of judging for himself, of trying doctrines by them." Both minister and congregation have freedom of inquiry into the truth of God as taught in his Word, untrammelled by creeds, unterrified by suspicions of heresy, or threats of disfellowship from their brethren. This attitude toward Scripture and creed puts pre-eminent honor on the Scripture, but does not dishonor the creed. And this attitude is safest. "He who attempts to read the Bible through a creed," says Dr. Thompson, "is like Galileo attempting to read the heavens through the catechism, instead of a telescope." What twisted

[1] New-England Chronology, p. 177.

exegesis results from the attempt to interpret the heavens of revelation through a formula, we may judge from the Presbyterian Book of Discipline.[1]

The more honest and thorough application of the principle that the Word of God in the Scriptures furnishes the sole objective authority for the churches of Christ, both in the positive and in the negative form of that principle, is distinctive of Congregationalism. But the extent to which the principle is applied constitutes another distinguishing feature of our church order. This sole objective authority extends to the constitution, discipline, and worship of the Christian Church. The formal principle asserts, then, that the Word of God is designed to furnish, and does actually furnish, a guide for the leading of Christ's people in a church way. The constitution and government of churches is ordered by the Spirit, speaking through the principles of the New Testament germane to this subject, and also speaking by the example of the churches of the New Testament as they were founded by the apostles: the constitution and government of churches is ordered by the Spirit of God to be after a certain type. This may seem a very High-Church tenet, may seem somewhat too much like various misapplications of the doctrine of divine right: it is, however, both in fact and in logic, an element of the formal principle of our church order. Our fathers in the faith never formed their Congregational churches as a matter merely of convenience or temporary expediency. Convenience does not force men in conscience to separate from the State Church: expediency is no guide to persecution. Principle must lay hold of men when they are to face angry bishops and kings for the

[1] See, e.g. book I., chap. viii. sect. 2, note, and chap. ix. sect 6, note. Compare the remarks in Dr. Dexter, Congregationalism, p. 53, f.

sake of associating themselves together as Christians in a certain form of the Church state. It has been fashionable among Congregationalists, for more than a half-century, to look upon the constitution and discipline and worship of churches as matters which believers may rightly undertake very nearly as seems right in their own sight. It has been considered the only true liberality to be indifferent on grounds of principle to one's form of church government: to be facile in making changes from one form to another has been counted a mark of freedom from bigotry. It has even been made a matter of conscience to depart, and to aid others to depart, from the New-Testament way of organizing and managing Christian churches. Now, whether this view which converts adherence to our principles of church order into a shallow and barren expediency be true in theory or not, it is certainly far from being true to the facts of our history. The true church polity never could have raised its head above the surface, if its original seed had been sown in such a field as this; and it will never show, and ought never to show, any thrift in self-propagation, if its growth is expected from such a seed-thought as this.

The argument from Scripture to prove that the Christian churches of the New Testament were Congregational churches, and that the very principles and method and form of their foundation show them to be designed as models, for substance of that doctrine of the Church which they present, to all churches of Christ to the end of time, has been frequently and minutely and convincingly made.[1] The early writers elaborated it very fully, because they were working wholly along

[1] Among more recent writers, especially in Dr. Dexter's Congregationalism, etc.

the line of its idea. Their entire purpose was to discover and promulgate the New-Testament doctrine of a Christian Church. "As to ecclesiastical matters," says Prince, "they held the following articles to be agreeable to Scripture and reason." The "following articles" are ten heads of doctrine concerning the constitution, discipline, and worship of the churches of Christ.[1] And the author pertinently adds, "These were the main principles of that scriptural and religious liberty for which this people suffered in England, fled to Holland, traversed the ocean, and sought a dangerous retreat in these remote and savage deserts of North America, that here they might fully enjoy them, and leave them to their last posterity."

Upon this view of the formal principle of Congregationalism, — the view which was, without doubt, held by our fathers, — let us weigh the following remarks.

This view makes Congregationalism a matter of principles to which the believer is, by the law of the authority of Scripture, bound to adhere. He may not accept at his pleasure these principles, and then at his pleasure lay them one side. Is, then, — do you ask? — every Christian bound to become a Congregationalist? In reply I may, first of all, say, Every Congregationalist is bound to be such as a matter of principle. The placidity of expediency has no more place with us than the irritation of sectarianism. We hold our church order, if at all, from the New Testament. Whatever habits we may ourselves have contracted which are contrary to these principles, we are, by the principles, bound as rapidly as possible to change: whatever improvements we can make in the manifestation of these principles, we are at liberty to make. And as to others I may say, in

[1] See New-England Chronology, p. 177, f.

the second place, Every believer is obligated to accept and carry out, as far as possible, the principles of the New Testament with respect to the ordering of Christian churches, as with respect to every thing else. The doctrine of the Church, its due constitution, discipline, and worship, is a doctrine of no mean order in the Christian system of truth. It is intimately connected with the doctrine of Sacred Scripture and with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The doctrines of regeneration, of the sacraments, of sanctification, and even of Christ as the sole Mediator and Teacher of men, are intimately connected with it. Every believer is obligated, then, to embrace the principles of Congregationalism just so fast and so far as he can see them to be principles of the New Testament. But so-called Congregational churches may in fact abandon their principles, and churches still called by another name may in fact accept those principles; and, without doubt, the obligation to be somehow connected with the visible church of Christ is a higher obligation than to be connected with a church of any particular order.

This view show us how the High-Church doctrine of the right of our church order to universal acceptance may be combined with great catholicity. Our fathers held this doctrine, and yet they were, for their times and circumstances, eminently catholic. They separated from the Church of England, and yet they hated sectarianism. They regarded that New-Testament polity which they had rediscovered as the only solvent of sects. It is only in and through a return to the scriptural idea of the Church, that John Owen hopes for the final and sound healing of all the scars and sores of schism. When the churches of his day, by considering the life and spirit of the apostolic churches, should

learn to walk in the same principle of grace in which they walked, and to renounce every thing foreign to it, the great end of unity would be secured. The "*common way*," of setting up "*standards* and *measures* of agreement," or the "middle way," of reconciling parties by umpiring all their differences, will, in his opinion, never succeed. "Endless disappointments," "new differences and digladiations," will attend these ways. There is but one way available, — the way of conformity to the pattern of the New Testament, which is according to the mind of Christ.[1] And the thought of Owen is the same as that of Dr. Foster, when he declares, "If we are content with the Scripture rule, we may unite in affection and brotherly communion, though we cannot in opinion."

The unity of the Word of God in Scripture and the witness of sanctified human reason, as a unity which evinces and tests the claim of the Bible; the sole authority of this Word, both in the positive form of the statement, as asserting the obligations of adherence to the Scripture, and in the negative form, as denying the power of the creed to place the believer under similar obligations to the creed; the extending of this authority of the Word to the constitution, discipline, and worship of the churches of Christ, — these are the three elements of doctrine which have rendered the formal principle of Congregationalism somewhat distinctive and unique.

I close this Lecture with an illustration of its main truths, taken from a recent dispute which has somewhat agitated our writers upon church polity, as well as certain of our churches.

[1] See the treatise On the Spirit, Book ix. chap. v. The section beginning "There are many sore divisions at this day" is especially worthy of careful study.

From the Minutes for 1878 of the ecclesiastical body whose action will be briefly passed in review before this formal principle of Congregationalism, I extract the following words: —

Resolved, That the General Convention of Congregational churches of Vermont understand that to be a pastor of a Congregational church indicates and requires the acceptance of the historic belief of these churches as it has been from time to time expressed by their representative assemblies; and that to remain pastor of a Congregational church, and to claim denominational fellowship with our churches and ministers, after any substantial part of this historic belief has been repudiated, is considered by us as a breach of faith, and inconsistent with honor and Christian character.

Upon this earlier form of the celebrated Vermont Resolution I venture these strictures. The spirit which animates these words is apparently adverse to the spirit which has habitually breathed through the first of the two fundamental principles of our church order. Of other and private reasons for estimating these words thus unfavorably, we have no right to know or take account. We judge the animating spirit by the words which here body it forth. That spirit as clothed in these words seems obviously one to be deprecated and rebuked. The noble habit of Congregationalism has been to declare its adherence to the common faith in the spirit of communion, and in a form to unite, rather than to separate, brethren in Christ. The Cambridge Platform, in the declaration of its Preface accepting for substance the Westminster Confession, and the Saybrook Confession of Faith in its acceptance of the Savoy Creed, show the spirit of unity in the very words they employ. The Vermont Resolution is nothing if it be not a declaration of orthodoxy. But such a declaration should always be made by Congregationalists

in a fraternal and uniting way. Yet here is involved the assumption that some persons are claiming denominational fellowship after having "repudiated" (mark the offensiveness of the term) some substantial part of the historic belief. Here is talk of conduct in Congregational pastors which is a "breach of faith," and "inconsistent with honor;" of conduct, indeed, which is below the moral standard of the world in ordinary business affairs. No subsequent denial of intention can change the laws of language, and of the human mind in receiving impressions from forms of language. The spirit of this resolution certainly seems, when compared with that of all worthy declarations of orthodoxy made by gatherings of Congregationalists, as uncongregational as it is unfortunate. The resolution does not read like one fit to follow by two centuries and a half the words of John Robinson of Leyden.

We note also of this earlier resolution, that it omits all recognition of the great formal principle of our church order. In all creeds, symbols, confessions of faith, and declarations of orthodoxy, or statements of agreement with brethren of other churches in the essentials of Christian doctrine, this principle should somehow be recognized: it is better that it should be distinctly expressed. Perhaps this feeling led the framers of the Vermont Resolution in its second form to make some mention of the Word of God, and even to allude to it as "our only rule of faith." But it is scarcely a sufficient excuse for this omission in the earlier resolution, to say that the principle was assumed as a matter of course, was deemed too well admitted to need expression in words; for the fact is by no means so. Indeed, from this resolution itself we should be forced to judge it far from so. And we may inquire, What tem-

porary obscuration had the formal principle of Congregationalism suffered in the mean time, that it should need mention in the year 1879, and need no acknowledgment in the year 1878? It has been the time-honored and honorable, and only safe custom of Congregationalism to acknowledge and avow its formal principle whenever making, in any form, declaration of adherence to the faith. We are reminded at this point of the biting sarcasm with which the Ipswich pastor, Rev. John Wise, wrote of the sixteen proposals to consociate the churches of Massachusetts, because these proposals made no mention of the Word of God: "It is turned so naked into the world as not to have the least tincture of Scripture to guard it from contempt; no, not so much as a citation that might admit of so much as a strained consequence in its defence."[1]

These patent objections, and still others as patent, secured the displacement of this form of the resolution by another form, which was offered in the Convention of 1879, by the committee to whom the earlier form was referred. The second form of the Vermont Resolution reads as follows: —

Resolved, That the General Convention of Congregational Ministers and Churches of Vermont, while recognizing the entire absence of authority in the convention over the churches, understands that to be pastor of a Congregational church indicates and requires the acceptance of the Word of God — which is our only rule of faith — as teaching the doctrines commonly called evangelical, held in our churches from the early times, and sufficiently set forth by former General Councils, notably by the councils at Boston and Oberlin; and that the repudiation of any substantial part of these doctrines (held in common by all evangelical churches) is considered by us as inconsistent with continued claim to denominational fellowship with our ministers and churches.

[1] Churches Quarrel Espoused, 5th query.

We note a decided improvement in this form of the resolution as compared with the first, in that the formal principle of Congregationalism is here openly avowed. Yet the manner of the avowal is still such as to contain a constructive denial of the same principle. We have already seen that this principle refuses to send the believer for his rule of faith to the Word of God *as interpreted* in and through any form of creeds. Such a form of holding the principle covertly destroys it while openly avowing allegiance to it. Does, then, this resolution mean simply to state, that, as a matter of fact, Congregationalists do interpret the Scriptures in substantial accord with their brethren of the different denominations called evangelical? or does it mean to erect the so-called evangelical creeds as interpretations of Scripture into a rule of faith for Congregational pastors co-ordinate with, or even superior to, the Scripture itself? With the former meaning, the statement would be one of simple truthfulness to fact. If the resolution meant the former fact, it should so have stated its meaning as to have admitted of no misunderstanding: having done this, it would have removed all formidable objection. If it meant the latter opinion, it covertly denied the very principle it openly asserted. There is for Congregationalism only one objective rule of faith: this is the Word of God in the Bible as seen in its unity with the Christian consciousness, its interpreter. The resolution seems to imply that the interpretation of the Christian consciousness is *finished* and set forth in *obligatory* form by the creeds of our former general councils. Such a doctrine would certainly have greatly shocked John Robinson and the founders of Congregationalism. To this interpretation of the resolution we are, however, almost forced by the

fact that the motion to amend, by adding the following words, "Provided that nothing herein affirmed be construed as a denial of the right of appeal from all human creeds to the Word of God," was lost by a large majority.

And, should it be claimed that the entire transaction was instituted in this convention in the interests of the entire denomination, we have no question to raise concerning the motives of those brethren who were its supporters. But the wisdom of their proceeding would doubtless have been described by the author just quoted in such terms as he applied to the advocates of the before-mentioned sixteen proposals: "They appear (indeed) something in the manner of Nehemiah's men on the wall (Neh. iv. 17). As it were with a trowel in one hand, with which they now and then put on a little untempered mortar, to plaister over a thing or two, where the old work by length of time is somewhat weather-beaten, to pacify the jealousies of the inhabitants, that they may think these builders (surely) are mending and not marring their old comfortable habitation. But in reality they have in the other hand a formidable maul, not as Nehemiah's weapon to defend, but to break down, the building; for they are all hands at work banging the platform in pieces upon which the old fabrick is built."[1]

If the length at which the formal principle of Congregationalism has been treated in this Lecture should seem somewhat out of proportion to the satisfactoriness of the treatment, I beg to remind you of the great difficulty of this theme. Upon it we are confident there is yet "more light and truth to break forth out of his holy Word."

[1] Rev. John Wise in Churches Quarrel Espoused, 4th query.

LECTURE VI.

THE PRINCIPLE OF A REGENERATE MEMBERSHIP.

Among the secondary or derived principles of the true church polity there is no other one so nearly pre-eminent, both in itself, and in its relation to the remaining principles of the same rank, as that of a regenerate membership. This third one in the order of enumeration is first in the order of logic. The visible church of Christ should be composed only of such persons as give credible evidence of having in a godly way repented of their sins, believed unto salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ as their divine Saviour, and begun a life of allegiance to him as their King. The conviction that upon this principle alone can the constitution of the Church be duly and safely placed was distinctive, in their time, with the founders of our church order. Nothing else more pressed upon the consciences, weighed in the judgments, and bore down upon the hearts, of these men, than the fact that they were compelled by the constitution of the Church of England to commune, in a church way, with men who were manifestly unbelieving in heart, and even flagrantly unholy in life. To tolerate those who differed from them in the theory and practice of church government, they found by no means impossible. To receive to their communion the godly members of the Church of England, they by no means re-

fused. They were not unmindful of the obligation laid upon them by the Word of God, to be patient with weakness, long-suffering with error, gentle in giving rebuke. They did not make conformity in creed a condition of membership in their churches. Their complaint was not that they might probably be in church bonds with those who could not pronounce some Shibboleth in their fashion, or who had honest mental difficulties with certain scriptural truths. They found "profane Atheists, scandalous mockers, and grossly ignorant persons," in the so-called Christian churches of which they were legally bound to be members. The pastors were required to administer the sacraments to such: the brethren had no power to sever such from their Christian brotherhood. Their study of the New Testament led them to know that the apostolic churches were constituted in a different way: the witness of their pure consciences led them to believe that their churches ought to be constituted in the apostolic way. They reasoned: "Profane Atheists, and scandalous mockers, and grossly ignorant persons, have no spiritual communion with Christ (neither according to the influence of saving graces, nor of common gifts); and therefore such persons are not to be received members of that body, the church, whereof Christ is the head." [1]

The great importance of this principle, in itself considered, is readily made obvious. But let us see more particularly what is its relation to all the other principles of a true church polity. Practically the law which determines the nature of the membership of different churches will determine much else in all the characteristics of their doctrine and life. The constitution of

[1] Words taken from Cotton's treatise, Of the Holinesse of Church-Members, London, 1650, p. 26.

the Church is the fundamental fact in the order of its development: the laws followed in constituting any particular church organize the elements of its subsequent history, and determine what sort of a church it shall be in unfolding the elements intrusted to it according to the working of those laws. We cannot, indeed, look upon any particular church as the mere aggregate of the individual members which are at any one time in the enjoyment of its communion; but the principles of communion upon which it is constituted, and according to which it is developed, will largely determine the nature of its membership. The principles which underlie its constitution and growth, and the actual condition in doctrine and life of the membership, will together show us fully what the church is. Different ways of constituting different churches have much to do, then, with their total difference. The church which requires from its members assent to creeds will differ from that which requires credible evidence of so-called saving faith: both of these will differ from those churches which require only that their members shall be born into membership.

The intimate and pre-eminent influence of this principle, in its relation to the other principles of church polity, is almost equally obvious. It was in no small degree on account of their desire to secure the privilege of separating themselves from the unregenerate in their church life, that the early Congregationalists laid so much emphasis upon the exclusive rulership of Jesus Christ. And, indeed, if Christian churches are not to be composed of those who profess really to acknowledge Christ as both Saviour and King, it is difficult to see why they should claim the right to live as churches solely under his rule. If the members of the "particu-

lar visible church" do not themselves in fact acknowledge Christ as their King, why should they demand of the civil government, or of other churches, that they, on their part, acknowledge the right of the particular visible church to have no other king? An institution practically political may in practice be required to submit to political rule. In other words, the principle of Christ's kingdom as a spiritual kingdom requires both that its members should be spiritual subjects, and that they should, as such subjects of government, have no other ruler but their spiritual King.

The right working, also, of the principle of individual equality and self-control is dependent upon the validity of this principle of a regenerate membership. He who is controlled by Christ has the right in the church to control himself: he is the man whose heart is in real allegiance to Christ. Popes and patriarchs and priests and bishops and kings — claiming to have supreme or pre-eminent authority over their brethren, and setting themselves up for vicegerents of Christ, and heads of the Church of Christ — have some fitness of place amongst those who, while making a show of being in a spiritual kingdom, do not claim to be members of that kingdom on spiritual grounds. But the element of individualism may safely have freer play in the visible church of Christ when the individualism is of that kind known as "*sanctified.*" Doubtless these human authorities are providentially permitted, and useful as long as the visible church does not avowedly bow the heart of each member before the true spiritual authority. Only when a man calls in the spirit to the Saviour as his Lord is he both inclined and fitted to declare I have no other spiritual lord.

The relation of the autonomy of the local church to

this principle of a regenerate membership is similar to the relation just indicated. "Men adorned with a double sett of ennobling immunities" have no need to be "clapt under a government which is arbitrary and despotic." Particular visible churches must be governed in some way: the true, safe, and scriptural way is that they should govern themselves by submission of their spirits to the mind of the Holy Spirit, and by free asking and gracious accepting of the advice of others who have the mind of the Spirit in like manner with themselves. But if by their very constitution so-called churches are composed of members who have neither disposition nor ability thus to govern themselves, they must still somehow be controlled. The lack of disposition and ability does not, we presume, fatally belong to any body of regenerate men, however weak and erring; although it would be difficult, I admit, to reconcile the presumption with all the facts. Moreover, the apostolic method had certain means of disciplining churches in self-control, to which means we should not hesitate to resort. Autonomy belongs fitly, then, only to churches which are constituted upon the basis of a regenerate membership. But churches which have not a regenerate membership cannot be expected to exercise a Christian and spiritual self-control. They must, then, to some extent, be controlled *ab extra*, and by officers expressing the authority of a historic system or of an organized and compacted ecclesiastical scheme. The one great reason for any seeming failures of the principle of self-control for the local church is given in a lack of Christian wisdom and Christian love within its own membership.

And, further, the real and Christian communion of churches is a direct result from the regenerate character of the members of each particular visible church. In

general, the law of Christian communion among churches is that the communion shall correspond to the facts. The appearance of fellowship in life is only the just and normal expression of the reality of communion in the spirit. This reality is secured by the normal working of the principle of regenerate membership. The regenerate heart loves its brother Christian, and longs for fellowship with him. The regenerate mind trusts the deliverances of the Spirit in and through other regenerate minds; it naturally and necessarily desires to share its wisdom with its brother's wisdom, its love with its brother's love; and it is always interested in the things of Christ's universal kingdom. But as to any real communion of so-called churches whose members have no real love according to the gospel for one another, we can, of course, have nothing at all to say. There may be an organized uniformity, but there cannot be a real Christian communion, among churches composed of unregenerate members.

The right adjustment of the principle of conservation with that of progress through individual inquiry is also dependent upon this principle of a regenerate membership. It is through minds which have been really illumined and quickened from on high that genuine progress comes to the Christian Church. Genuine progress conserves the old truth: it also seeks out with diligence, and receives with joy, the new. This is the normal attitude of the regenerate soul toward truth, — an attitude, alas! too often misdirected, misunderstood, and persecuted by the Church. But who shall make this required perpetual re-adjustment, if it be not made by minds illumined from on high? Who shall take this right attitude toward the truth of God, if it be not taken by those whose hearts are in the right attitude toward God himself?

This principle of a regenerate membership is, then, one of pre-eminent importance to the faith of Congregational churches. It is the working of it which determines the attitude of the members of our churches to our common Christian faith. It is in the light of it that we must ask and answer the practical question, What are the requisite conditions for membership in the local Congregational Church? The question can be answered as a question of fact, only by collecting and collating all the present varied practices of the different churches. It would thus be made to appear how many so-called Congregational churches are actually carrying out the ancient principle. This we by no means propose or care to do. As a pure question of principle, — and as a question of principle it is now proposed, — it can be answered by reference to the foregoing truths as they are evinced in the practice of the apostolic and of the early Congregational churches.

The application of the principle of a regenerate membership involves two particulars, or rather it shows two sides of its one essential character. None but those who give credible evidence of being true believers may compose the membership of a Congregational Church. Congregational churches are to afford the privileges of Christian communion in a church way by offering to enter into a covenant with all who do give this evidence. As to what is credible evidence, the Church must in each instance, according to its best means of obtaining and judging evidence, make up its mind. This one principle, then, limits the action of the Church in two directions. The Church has no right to receive to her communion persons whom she must believe unregenerate. The Church has no right to exclude from her communion any person whom she may in charity find giving evidence of regeneration.

That the Christian churches of whose constitution and history we have information in the New Testament were designedly founded upon the basis of a new life in their members, there can be no reasonable doubt. Those who are received into these churches are everywhere represented as holding their title to membership on the evidence that they have become true believers in Christ. Those who heard the apostle Peter at Pentecost had their hearts penetrated with sharp pain on account of their sins: they were exhorted to change their underlying moral purpose, and be baptized upon the ground of their faith in the Lord Jesus; and, when they had accepted this exhortation to salvation, they were in fact baptized. Those whom the Spirit of Christ at that time added daily to the church are designated as *οἱ σωζόμενοι*,[1] those already in process of salvation. The members of the churches are designated as "called of Jesus Christ," "called saints,"[2] "sanctified in Christ,"[3] "saints and believers in Christ Jesus,"[4] "believing brethren in Christ."[5] He who reads with candor 1 Thess. i. 1–7 and 2 Thess. i. 1–4 cannot doubt what was the basis of membership in the earliest Christian churches. He who has a high regard for the thought and wish of Christ as expressed in these apostolic churches will be loath indeed either to take from or add to those conditions of membership upon which they were founded.

To these conditions it was the intention of modern

[1] Acts ii. 37, f., 41, 47. [2] Rom. i. 6, f. [3] 1 Cor. i. 2.

[4] Eph. i. 1. Πιστοῖς is not in this connection to be translated "faithful," but believing, *fidem in Christo reponentibus:* so Meyer, De Wette, and Ellicott, who all also connect ἐν Χριστῷ with πιστοῖς alone, the latter remarking truly that the phrase implies union and fellowship with Christ.

[5] Col. i. 2. Πιστοῖς should be translated "believers" in this passage also: so Grimm (lexicon), De Wette, and Meyer, but not Ellicott.

Congregationalism to conform its laws and practice; although, in fact, both laws and practice have at times departed, and are even at present removed, from the first intention. The doctrine of the Cambridge Platform is in this regard essentially, but not quite purely, apostolic. This is manifest in its definitions of the matter and form of a particular visible church. "The matter of a visible church are saints by calling." "Those who have and show the knowledge of the principles of religion," freedom from "gross and open scandals," "the profession of their faith and repentance," a walk "in blameless obedience to the Word, so as that in charitable discretion they may be accounted saints by calling," and "the children of such, who are also holy," are the matter of a visible church.[1] The form of a church is "the visible covenant, agreement, or consent, whereby they give up themselves unto the Lord, to the observing of the ordinances of Christ, together in the same society, which is usually called the church covenant."[2] "The things which are requisite to be found in all church-members are *repentance* from sin, and *faith* in Jesus Christ." "These are the things whereof men are to be examined at their admission into the church:" these things they must profess in such sort as to "satisfy rational charity that the things are there indeed."[3] It will readily be seen that the position of the children of those who are saints by calling, when as yet they have not manifested "their (own) faith and repentance by an open profession thereof," is left somewhat equivocal by the Platform. They are declared to belong to the matter of a particular visible church; they are spoken of as members of the church, being "born in the same," or having "received their membership"

[1] Chap. III. 1, 2. [2] Chap. IV. 3. [3] Chap. XII. 2.

"in their infancy or minority, by virtue of the covenant of their parents;" and yet they, too, must "manifest their faith and repentance by an open profession thereof before they are received to the Lord's Supper," or are considered "capable of being made partakers of full communion."[1] Two classes of persons called church-members are thus constituted. The principle of a regenerate membership is in all this, in theory, fully recognized; but the practice of the churches is not made to conform to the full recognition, and they are thus left in time partially to lose their first and fullest recognition of the principle itself. This effort to combine the principle with a practice which seemed necessary in theory, on account of the doctrine of God's covenant with believers in its extension to their children, and indispensable in fact, on account of previous and surrounding conditions of church life, gave much trouble to New-England Congregationalism.

John Cotton's treatise, "Of the Holinesse of Church-Members,"[2] printed at about the time of the construction of the Cambridge Platform, attempts this question of the requisites for church-membership in a discussion of nearly one hundred pages in length. Like the Platform, this treatise maintains essentially the doctrine of a regenerate membership for the particular visible church, and is at the same time conciliatory in its tone and rules of practice toward the men of a different view. "Such as are born of Christian parents, and baptized in their infancy into the fellowship of the church," are admitted to be "initiated members of the same church, though destitute of spiritual grace." Yet

[1] Chap. XII. 7.

[2] Printed in London, 1650, and addressed to his former people in Boston, England.

again it is declared: "Such persons, and such onely, are lawfully received as members into the fellowship of the visible Church, who do before the Lord, and his people, professe their repentance, and faith in Christ, and subjection to him in his ordinances."[1] And "such as are born and baptized members of the church," "unless, when they grow up to years," they submit to the same conditions, "are not orderly continued and confirmed members of the church." The same distinction between members born, or received in infancy, into the church, and members confirmed, or in full communion, which the Platform acknowledges, is here acknowledged and made more prominent by the treatise of Cotton. The debate as to the course which should be taken with those who, being members in the former sense, refused or neglected to become members in the latter sense, was certain to arise. This debate, as I have said, afterward sorely distracted the Congregational churches of New England.

"Visible saints," says Hooker,[2] "are the only true and mete matter whereof a visible church should be gathered;" and confederation (entering into a mutual covenant) is the form. "If upon this Rock (Christ believed on and publickly confessed, by grown persons) the Church of Christ is to be built, then the children of the Church, who were baptized in their infancy, when they come to be of ripe age, must hold forth publickly their personal confession of faith," — such is the sound and indisputable conclusion of John Davenport.[3]

To the views of Hooker and Davenport the earlier and purer practice of Congregational churches in this country conformed itself. None of these churches, ex-

[1] See sect. v. [2] Survey of Church Discipline, pp. 13, 14.
[3] Power of Congregational Churches, p. 22.

cept, for a time, the First Church in Dorchester, seems to have shown any disposition to depart from the true New-Testament principle as to the constitution of a particular visible church. We find that active lay evangelist, Dr. Samuel Fuller, disputing with Rev. John Warham, one of the ministers of this church, because the latter held that the visible church "may consist of a mixed people, godly and openly ungodly." The result of the dispute was the conformity of the Dorchester church to the practice of the other churches.

This question, however, having become, as might have been foreseen, a burning question, and the authority of the New Testament and of the Cambridge Platform having been claimed for their side by both classes of disputants, it received a different answer from the original one of Congregationalism at the hands of the synods of 1657 and 1662. The declarations of these synods show, not simply the same confusion of language which the early theory manifested: they show rather a departure from the principle which underlies the theory itself. "Church-members who were admitted in minority, understanding the doctrine of faith, and publicly professing their faith thereto, not scandalous in life, and solemnly owning the covenant before the church," are to have the privilege of having their children baptized. We note in this provision these two elements, which both witness a departure from the ancient view; viz., the prominence given to a public intellectual assent to doctrine, and the invitation given to virtual hypocrisy, when it is assumed that men may, without a change of heart, solemnly own before the church a covenant in which "they give up themselves and children to the Lord, and subject themselves to the government of Christ in the church." The tendency here plainly

manifested is to make the conditions of enjoying full communion a matter of religious formalism and compliance with custom, rather than of inner attitude toward God and Christ.

The subterfuges resorted to in argument by those who favored the Half-way Covenant, in order that they might satisfy themselves and others of their substantial accord with the New Testament and with their fathers in regard to this doctrine, are really distressing. But scarcely any open avowals of contradiction to the principle of a regenerate membership for the material of a particular visible church are found until the close of the seventeenth century. In Hartford, in 1696, we find Mr. Woodbridge gathering a church without reference to the scriptural and truly Congregational requisition. Not credible evidence of a true Christian life, but "*owning the covenant*," is made the basis of its membership. The principle was verbally denied, for almost the first time in New England, in a sermon published by Rev. Solomon Stoddard of Northampton in 1707. This sermon maintains that "sanctification is not a necessary qualification to partaking of the Lord's Supper," and that "the Lord's Supper is a converting ordinance." And so far do the churches swing away from their ancient allegiance, that in 1750 the grandson of Mr. Stoddard, no other than Jonathan Edwards, was by a Congregational council removed from his pastorate in Northampton, because he opposed the admission of the unconverted to the communion of the Lord's Supper.

There is little doubt that the conceptions held by many of the founders of New-England Congregationalism concerning the nature of genuine Christian experience were meagre and formal: the tests which they

applied in searching and proving this experience were sometimes unbearably severe. But there is just as little doubt, that, in their return to the New-Testament way of constituting Christian churches, they found and used the only true principle from which to derive the requisites of membership in a particular visible church. These requisites are the credible evidences of true penitence and faith in Christ, and of a disposition to obey Christ as the absolute king. These requisites are all found in a certain attitude of heart and life toward the divine Redeemer. And, notwithstanding the early departures from this principle by our church order in its practical workings, the principle is to be reckoned originally distinctive of, and permanently obligatory upon, that order. It is now in its negative form — when regarded, that is, as barring out of the visible church all obviously impenitent and unbelieving persons — quite universally accepted by Congregational churches.

But we cannot forget that this principle has another aspect, and places the churches under another line of obligations. The principle provides that persons who do give credible evidence of genuine repentance and faith toward Christ shall be acknowledged as such, and admitted to the communion of saints. It forbids the church to receive to membership any but the apparently regenerate: it also forbids the church to exclude the apparently regenerate from its membership. It forbids, then, the use of all formulated declarations of faith as *barriers* to entrance into the particular visible church.

I wish distinctly to place the entire discussion upon the basis of principle. The question of the requisites for church-membership can never be wisely and safely

discussed as a matter of natural or social rights, or as a mere question of expediency. To argue that a church may make its own conditions of membership, upon the general principle that any body of men have the natural or social right, within the limits of the civil law, to associate themselves according to terms of association agreed upon among themselves, is to misunderstand and degrade this entire question.[1] No Christian church has any authority to constitute the terms of its own membership as a mere matter of natural or social right. Jesus Christ has constituted the terms of membership in churches called by his name: he has done this in the primal institution of his holy catholic church. He has confirmed the law of this constitution by the practice of the apostolic churches. I must confess that it seems to me little better than a mild form of constructive treason to attempt changes in this constitution which the Lord has given to his Church. The methods by which the particular visible church arrives at judgment upon the credible proofs of true discipleship may indeed be adapted to the exigencies of the cases involved: the judgment of the church as to what constitute themselves *credible* proofs may indeed greatly change. But to maintain that a particular visible church may make requisitions upon men who would come into its communion, which are not involved in the New-Testament requisitions, is a heresy under the formal principle of the true church polity.

The place of assent to creeds in the general requisitions for church-membership may now be made clearly apparent. They have no place here, except that of assistance in making manifest the proofs of true disciple-

[1] See, for an example of this erroneous view, Upham, Ratio Disciplinæ, p. 57.

ship. A certain *quantum* of the intellectual element is, to our judgment, always involved in true discipleship. A man cannot be admitted to membership in a Christian church who does not believe in a personal God and in the immortality of the soul. He cannot properly appear as a disciple of Christ when there is no reality, according to the New-Testament idea of discipleship, to which the appearance may correspond. There may be, moreover, such an obvious schism between the right attitude of heart and life toward Christ as the divine Redeemer, and certain intellectual views or dogmas concerning the nature of Christ, as will prevent the judgment of the church from finding credible proofs of its just requisitions in those holding these views. In every age and place, and individual case, the particular visible church of Christ is bound by his law to receive to its membership such applicants, as in the best use of its judgment, by its appointed means, it may determine that Christ has already received. It may make use of formulated statements of faith in this relation as an assistance to right judgment, but no farther. It may never use such statements as means for reversing or defeating the principle. In brief, a Congregational church cannot, without denial of one of the most important principles of our church order, make the acceptance of a creed a primal and indispensable requisite of membership. However useful its creed may be in testing, it cannot be made its test.

That the more trustworthy writers, and almost all the ancient churches, held this view of the application of the principle of a regenerate membership, there is abundant evidence.[1] To a small part of this evidence let us now attend.

[1] See Congregational Dictionary, pp. 131–39, for evidence additional

The prominence given to the profession of a Christian experience, and to the act of entering into covenant with the Church, clearly indicates on what, as a requisite for membership, our earliest writers and churches were inclined to insist. That congregation of true believers, who, under the leadership of John Robinson, furnished their "type and character" to the Congregational churches of New England, entered into church union in Scrooby, Eng., in the year 1602.[1] Their covenant was "into a church estate, in the fellowship of the gospel, to walk in all the ways of the Lord made known, or to be made known, unto them, according to their best endeavors, whatever it should cost them."[2] Transplanted to the soil of Massachusetts, and holding together by the roots of this covenant, this community of believers became the first church residing in New England. The first church *organized* in New England, viz., the First Church in Salem, was instituted after the model of the church in Plymouth. The commission given to Francis Higginson, "to draw up a confession of faith and covenant in Scripture language," resulted in the production of a document, usually called simply a Covenant, which is in no respect a creed, or articulated statement of doctrine. It is a *credo*, or simple confession of heart-faith in God and Christ, blended with promises to serve him, and walk in Christian unity with the brethren. "We avouch the Lord to be our God, and ourselves to be his people in the truth and simplicity of our spirits," is the

to that here produced. The ancient practice and authority upon this point are more conclusive than upon almost any other in our church order.

[1] See Historical Sketch of Congregational Churches in Massachusetts, p. 3, note; Bacon's Genesis of New-England Churches, p. 199; Morton's New-England Memorial, p. 9.

[2] Bradford's History of Plymouth Plantation, p. 9.

most explicit statement of doctrine contained in it.[1] Of even this most simple confession of faith and covenant, Morton declares, in his "New-England Memorial" (p. 145, f.), that it "was acknowledged only as a direction, pointing unto that faith and covenant contained in the Holy Scripture." And Dr. Bentley truly says, "It may be esteemed, if not for its theology, for its simplicity. If it speak not the language of a sect, it breathes the spirit of Christian union. It never could be intended so much to display opinions, as, by written obligation, to fasten men together." In accordance with the intent of this early covenant of the church at Salem was the practice of the same church. Its records tell us, concerning the admission of eight members (March 9, 1678), that "no exception coming against them, they making their profession of faith and repentance in their own way, — some by speech, others by writing, which was read for them, — they were admitted to membership in this church, by consent of the brethren, they engaging themselves in the covenant."[2] "Which diversity was," according to the just encomium of Cotton Mather, "perhaps more beautiful than would have been a more punctilious uniformity." This practice is, indeed, in punctilious uniformity with that which Prince, on the authority of Gov. Winslow, ascribes to both Pastor Robinson and Elder Brewster, who were wont to show such as, upon joining them in church covenant, inclined to go further than seemed necessary to these leaders in a state-

[1] It has been disputed at great length whether the church in Salem had not originally also a more technical confession of faith. But the evidence decides the dispute with an unwavering negative. See especially the whole of New-England Congregationalism in its Origin and Purity, illustrated by the Foundation and Early Records of the First Church in Salem. By Hon. D. A. White.

[2] See New-England Congregationalism, etc., p. 83.

ment of belief, that it was required of them "only to hold forth faith in Jesus Christ, holiness in the fear of God, and submission to every divine appointment."[1] According to the historian of Charlestown,[2] the covenant of the church organized there in 1632 "was copied almost word for word" from that of the church organized in 1630, and transferred in the same year to Boston. In this case, both the First Church in Boston and the First Church in Charlestown did not depart from the example of the churches in Plymouth and in Salem. The covenant proposed by those churches "to particular persons for their consent when they are to be admitted" to the church, simply avouches belief in "the only true God to be your God, according to the tenor of the covenant of his grace," and promises to walk in all ways "according to the rule of the gospel." In the practice of the First Church in Boston, however, we find that provision was made for admitting those who "scrupled the practice of making a relation as usual at admissions," in case "they do make a public profession of their faith or belief." This public profession of belief, however, was not assent to a stipulated creed, required as a condition of membership, but only a form which might be chosen by the candidate for making manifest to the church his evidence of true discipleship. There is little doubt that the conception and custom regarding the requisites for church-membership, which prevailed in the above four churches, were common to all the earliest Congregational churches in New England. To borrow the language of Davenport, "The formal cause of a particular visible church was its covenant." The entering into the covenant required credible evidence of genuine

[1] New-England Chronology, p. 175.
[2] Richard Frothingham, jun.: see History of Charlestown, pp. 67, 70.

Christian piety. But the covenant, or confession of faith, which was originally one with the covenant, was in no strict sense of the word a creed or formulated statement of doctrine: it was an avouchment of allegiance to God and to Christ, and a promise to walk in the way of this allegiance. "I do not remember," declares Palfrey,[1] "a material deviation from this catholic character in any of a considerable number of early covenants which have come under my eye."

Moreover, if we judge fairly from the utterances of the earlier writers, we must conclude that they considered it wrong, contradictory both of the principles of the New Testament and of the avowed principles of their church order, for a community of believers to bar from its communion any one who gave to them credible evidence of repentance and faith. *Not* to make creeds tests of membership, or means of separating brethren, was a principle with them. With them creeds were rather manifestoes of unity with all true Christians, — means of exhibiting the real unity of the Church in Christ.

"Addition to Christ's terms," says Baxter,[2] "is very perilous, as well as diminution, when men will deny either church entrance or communion to any that Christ would have received, because they come not up to certain terms which they, or such as they, devise." "No man or set of men," declares Robert Hall, "are entitled to prescribe as an indispensable condition of communion what the New Testament has not enjoined as a condition of salvation." "It is presumptuous to aspire to greater purity and strictness in selecting the materials of a church than are observed by its divine Founder."

[1] History of New England, vol. ii. p. 36, note.
[2] Works, vol. iv. p. 653.

"We are expressly commanded in the Scriptures," he asserts, "to tolerate in the Church those diversities of opinion which are not inconsistent with salvation."[1] In these views the foregoing writers agree with Bishops Stillingfleet and Taylor, the former of whom asks, "What charter hath Christ given the Church to bind men up to, more than himself hath done? or to exclude those from her society who may be admitted into heaven?" and the latter of whom declares that "particular churches are bound to allow communion to all those that profess the same faith upon which the apostles did give communion." The Congregational doctrine, however, rightly insists that the local church shall have *credible evidence* of the reality of the profession made by those seeking its communion. Having given such evidence, the applicant for membership in the particular visible church is to be invited to its fellowship on the basis of a mutual covenant. Of this basis of visible fellowship Thomas Goodwin says,[2] "The church covenant is no more with us than this,—an agreement and resolution professed, with promise to walk in all those ways pertaining to this fellowship, so far as they shall be revealed to them in the gospel." He further declares that their intention is to apply themselves to men's consciences "thus briefly and indefinitely and implicitly," and not to obtrude upon men "the mention of any one particular before or in admission." The "Apologetical Narration" asserts that the rules for admission to the churches of the Independents were such "as would take in any member of Christ. We took no measure of any man's holiness by his opinions, whether concurring with us, or adverse from us." "We will never

[1] On Terms of Communion, Preface, and beginning of sect. ii.
[2] Letters to John Goodwin, p. 44.

deny the communion," says John Owen, "to any person whose duty it is to desire it." And Dr. Watts, in his "Terms of Christian Communion," shows, as it is declared in the so-called Congregational Dictionary,[1] "that the churches may not appoint new rules of admission; as a general rule should admit all who make a *credible* profession of religion . . . take heed not to make the door of admission larger or straiter than Christ made it; and that nothing be in their covenant but what is essential to our common Christianity."

Both applications of the one principle of a regenerate membership are made with equal clearness by John Cotton, in his treatise on the "Holinesse of Church-Members." "We receive none as members into the Church," says this author, "but such (as according to the judgement of charitable Christians) may be conceived to be received of God, into Fellowship with Christ, the head of the Church."[2] But on the other hand he accuses of credulity the objector to the way of New-England Congregationalism whose opinions he is controverting, "if he beleeve every such fabulous report, That we exclude any from our Churches whom we grant to be truly gracious and elect," and affirms that he does not know "that ever we refused any approved godly person upon point of difference in judgment about church government." "Nor do we pinch upon any godly man's conscience in point of Covenant, in case he be willing to professe his subjection to Christ in his Church according to the order of the Gospel."[3] In another place, in the same work, Cotton says, "Neither doe we require any more, than that men confesse their sin, and professe their repentance, and new obedience,

[1] See p. 133, f. [2] Ibid., p. 39. [3] Ibid., p. 60.

and bring forth such fruits, as doe not prevaricate, and deny such a profession."[1]

That Davenport held essentially the same view as that of Cotton, his writings abundantly show. His opposition to the sophisms which underlay the Half-way Covenant is well known. Davenport held that the baptized children of members in full communion became non-members, if they did not themselves "take hold of the covenant with the church."[2] But it was by no means assent to a creed which could rightfully constitute the test of fitness for full communion. He asserts that "the Baptism, and profession of the doctrine of Faith, with freedom from public scandal, do not formally constitute a church, nor make one a visible member of the church." Only those persons should be admitted to membership in the church who make "such a publick profession of their Faith as the Church may, in charitable discretion, conceive, hath blessedness annexed to it."[3] The distinction between "profession of the doctrine of Faith" and "profession of faith" as a ground of a real covenant with the church, is here plainly drawn. Indeed, Davenport expressly declares,[4] "Though some are at present weak in Faith, yet, if we may conceive that the Lord hath received them, the church must receive them."

This provision for receiving those weak in faith on a common basis of the heart's trust and love, as expressed in a mutual covenant, rather than bar them out by impossibility of a common creed, is also made by the Cambridge Platform, which affirms, in language that has the real flavor of the words of Jesus, "The weakest

[1] Congregational Dictionary, p. 90.
[2] Power of Congregational Churches, pp. 22, 28, 42.
[3] Ibid., p. 10. [4] Ibid., p. 12.

measure of faith is to be accepted in those that desire to be admitted into the church;" "Such charity and tenderness is to be used as the weakest Christian, if sincere, may not be excluded nor discouraged."[1]

It is, then, we conclude, genuine New-Testament and ancient Congregational doctrine to make the terms of admission to the particular visible church only this, — that the Church shall have reasonable satisfaction of repentance, faith, and loyalty toward Christ; and in its demand for satisfaction, the Church is to be so charitable and tender as to run the least possible risk of excluding any who belong to Christ. "We had rather," says Cotton,[2] "ninety-nine hypocrites should perish through presumption than one humble soule belonging to Christ should sinke under discouragement by despaire."

Nor let us forget that the primal requisition upon the Church to make its own requisitions correspond with those of Christ and the apostles is a matter of unchanging principle. We do not, then, aver too much when we affirm with Dr. Leavitt,[3] "The rule of church-fellowship which Congregationalism imposes *requires* the acknowledgment of all as Christians who give credible evidence of piety."[4] We must confess our hearty

[1] Chap. xii. sect. 3.

[2] Holiness of Church-Members, p. 90.

[3] Christian Spectator, 1831, p. 379. For a similar affirmation see an article of Dr. Leonard Bacon, in the New-Englander for 1856, p. 314.

[4] It is very discouraging to find Dr. Dexter, after having most elaborately and ably defended the truly scriptural and ancient Congregational doctrine of the nature of a Christian church, maintaining the position that only those can rightly belong to any given church, who "hold for substance the faith *as the church holds it*" (Congregationalism, p. 194). When the church finds a member, against whose moral character no charge can be made, and of whose true Christian discipleship his most intimate acquaintances are persuaded, holding views "destructive of its creed," the circumstances are indeed, as this author asserts,

appreciation of the pungent and just sarcasm employed by a Presbyterian paper, "The Interior" of Chicago, when it called upon Congregationalists to imitate the church order which that paper advocates, by taking their lions away from the church-door, and placing them at the foot of the pulpit-stairs.

The view that leads us to derive the requisites of church-membership from the principle which determines the very nature of this membership, also prevents us from supposing that upon this point the custom of our churches may ever fitly be changed. The formal principle of the true church polity binds it always to hold by its primal and essential ideas as to the institution, discipline, and worship of Christian churches. One essential idea of the Christian Church is seen to be this, that its members shall be such as can give proof to one another of being true members of the body of Christ. The principle of a regenerate membership is therefore to be regarded as an indestructible basis for constituting all Christian churches everywhere and in all times. But this principle both requires us to refuse to walk in a church way with such as are manifestly not members of the body of Christ, and it also requires us not to refuse thus to walk with those who may in charity be considered as giving proof that they are members of his body. The application of this principle a church has no right to shrink from, or refuse to endeavor to make. The particular formal way in which it makes the application it is at liberty to change.

"peculiarly trying." But the question lies back of these circumstances. Has the church a right to make assent to a creed a test of membership? Later on in his work (p. 238) we find the author, however, asserting that "due facilities for entering upon church relations should be everywhere within reach of the redeemed." Should not, then, Congregationalism afford such facilities? Is it not fitted to be the *sole* church in a community?

As to what are credible proofs of true discipleship, individuals and churches may learn by experience: they may even expand and correct their views of the nature of Christian faith. This necessary modification of views as to the different manifestations of the one life in Christ has properly enough introduced modifications of the customs of the churches in receiving their members. The prevalent views of what I may call the *praxis* of the Spirit in regeneration have largely changed. We still believe that each new birth is of the Holy Ghost, and that no man should be received into the Church of Christ, except upon the supposition that he is born of the Holy Ghost. Our knowledge of the divine methods of bringing souls to this birth is, we may hope, clearer, and more conformed to the phenomena of apostolic times, than was that of our fathers. *Credible evidence* may, then, be another thing with us from that which they required.

The phenomena of the religious life as to its thoughts, emotions, and purposes, assume different types in different ages of the Church. The distinctions of these types are caused by many and constantly varying influences. The ideas which prevail in religious instruction regarding the nature of God and the person of Christ will have much to do with determining the way in which human hearts will give themselves to God and Christ. Vast historic forces in government, literature, theology, and social life, will also have much to do in shaping these ideas. He who lives under a civil control which he abhors, and regards as usurping an unjust exercise of authority, will turn to God as *King*, if he turn at all, will rebel consciously and stoutly against God as *his* king, if he do not turn at all. He who in the midst of universal restlessness of heart hears the

voice of Jesus say, Come, and I will give you rest, will necessarily regard his Saviour somewhat differently from him who has carried Christ's cause before persecuting kings on the point of his bayonet or the edge of his sword.

We are inclined either to complain of the ancients or of ourselves, when we consider what proofs of repentance and faith they found necessary to satisfy rational charity that the things existed indeed. And doubtless there are grounds of complaint against both them and us. But such grounds do not lie in the mere fact that different proofs satisfy the same rational charity at different eras of the Church of Christ. Our fathers had a strong, clear type of regeneration before their minds, and they sought for it in the experience of every one professing faith. They found what they sought. The type which they instituted and cultivated actually prevailed. The actual *praxis* of the Spirit was according to the logic of the sermons, narratives, and confessions of experience, prevalent in that day. But all experiences would not conform to the same rule, all views of doctrine would not fit in the same creed, practice could not be both successful and uniform, with them in their day as truly as with us now. We should remember all this when we see them providing for differences between individuals, and allowing each to state his belief and experience, either by proxy or in person, in his own way. And gradually the formality and hypocrisy fostered by the custom of "Relations" led to their disuse. While, then, the general sincerity of these earlier professions of repentance and faith, so stereotyped and formal as they usually appear, need not be questioned by us, the charity with which they received even the weakest measure of what seemed to them genu-

ine faith should be imitated by us. Nor can we forget that their severer means of discovering and measuring faith did not secure them against the self-deceived and hypocritical. There was in their methods great temptation to profess experience, and confess doctrine in the stereotyped way, even when the reality of experience did not justify the profession, and the intelligent convictions of truth did not underlie its confession. There was undoubtedly great temptation to name the minister as the means of grace to the convert's soul, and that through some particular favorite sermon of his; for the minister was expecting to hear himself thus named, and the escape by naming him was more easy from the ordeal of the public narrative.[1]

[1] Very interesting information regarding these so-called "Relations," or "Declarations of Christian Experience" may be found in an article (Appendix) by Rev. Samuel Sewall, contained in the American Quarterly Register, vol. xii. According to Mather they were reported to have taken their rise in 1634, not from regard to any assumed divine precept upon the matter, but from an account of the advantage of hearing such "Relations" given by a brother who had been admitted to an examination by the elders. In 1651 the custom had become so prevalent, that Johnson intimates it to be the common mode in all the churches of New England. According to Mr. Sewall's statement, the "Relations" of the men were at first generally oral, those of the women written and read. It afterward became customary, at least in some churches, to commit them all to writing, and to read them at the admission of their authors to the church. In the records of the First Church of Charlestown, March 8, 1684–85 it is written, "Voted and concurred in by ye Chh. y^t *mens relations* (their *own pronouncing them* having been constantly found inconvenient) be for ye future *read: Nem. con.*" The custom, without doubt, in many instances degenerated into a mere formality. The English and Indian church at Natick voted Jan. 16, 1730 as follows: "Altho' we do not disapprove of persons making Relations when they are to be admitted to Communion; yet we esteem that this ought not to be a Term or Condition of Communion, so that none shall be received without it." "There are now" (1840), writes Mr. Sewall, "on the church files (that is of the Second Church of Woburn) several scores of these Relations by members received into communion between 1750 and 1775. But only about one-fifth part of the whole appear to be original, and in the handwriting of them who offered them. The remainder

And, further, modern customs are not to be condemned as uncongregational, because they differ from the ancient in the way appointed by the church for acquiring its requisite evidence of repentance and faith. In reality, however, these modern methods of examining candidates for membership are not so essentially different as is sometimes supposed. The show of a public questioning, or a reading of the written confession before the church, did not prevent the *officers* of the church from virtually administering nearly the whole of this trust. The number who, "through excessive fear, or other infirmity," were "unable to make their personal relation of their spiritual estate in public," and who resorted to the provision that "the elders, having received private satisfaction, make relation thereof in public before the church,"[1] might easily be expected largely to increase. The number for whom this is far the better way will doubtless always continue relatively very large. Nor can I believe that we have made any improvement upon the ancient custom, when we commit this trust of examining candidates for membership to a delegation from the brethren, whom we somewhat inanely call a "committee," rather than to those constituted and ordained officers to whom the New Testament and our fathers so largely committed the same trust. But, as you will again have occasion to discover, I am one of those doomed by my theory and convictions to take up a lament for the decay of the *order of elders* in our Congregational churches.

The principle of continually constituting anew and

were evidently composed and written by one and the same person, though subscribed in some instances by the candidates themselves. And all these run in much the same strain; and some of them contain whole sentences expressed in precisely or nearly the same words."

[1] Cambridge Platform, chap. xii. sect. 4.

replenishing the Church by the addition to it of all whom the Holy Spirit leads to repent of sin, and to believe unto salvation from sinning in our Lord Jesus Christ, is vital in the true church polity. From it no Congregational church should wittingly depart. This principle will do most to keep the churches purest both in doctrine and in life; for that the use of creeds as tests of fitness, and as barriers against the unfit, does not keep, and does not even tend to keep, the Church pure, the general experience has made abundantly clear. And if the witness of the general experience were not yet clearly distinguishable, we should be safe in abiding by the principles upon which Christ and the apostles instituted the Church. Thus much appears certain as matter of pure principle and undoubted truth.

And further, I give it somewhat hesitatingly, as an opinion based upon individual observation and experience, that the best means of applying the principle is a faithful board of ordained elders, to whom the Church commits, under responsibility to itself, the details necessary to the application.

LECTURE VII.

THE PRINCIPLES OF CONGREGATIONALISM APPLIED TO THE PURITY OF THE MINISTRY.

THE thorough working of the principle of a regenerate membership furnishes the chief means for securing, both in doctrine and in life, the purity of Christian churches. The purity of the churches is itself one of the chief means for securing the purity of the ministry. It is a quite familiar thought that the teaching and example of the pastors of our churches influence largely the condition in doctrine and life of those churches; but there is much less familiarity than should be with the counter-thought, that the doctrine and life of the churches find their most fully developed types in the ministry of the same churches.

Few will maintain, however, that the principle of a regenerate membership would alone suffice to furnish us with the rules and customs which are necessary to secure an able, sound, and holy ministry. The practices of different church orders with respect to their ministry will, indeed, differ largely in accordance with their attitude towards this principle. Those which do not require from their laity credible proofs of repentance and faith toward Christ will be likely not to require these conditions of fitness even from the ministry; but those who do require these conditions from both

laity and ministry will be sure to require from the latter somewhat more. The true church polity has always insisted that a man should have some special natural fitness, some special preparation by submission to training, and some such divine call as shall induce a special consecration, in order to become a Christian minister. This doctrine of the requisites for its ministry has been derived, in part from unconscious use of its formal principle, in part from reasoning — cruder or more correct — on the basis of various other Christian truths, and in part from an abundance of sad or happy experiences.

The application of the formal principle to all the exigencies and special cases which arise in the history of the churches is by no means easily to be made. The New Testament, indeed, describes the indispensable qualities to be required in the officer of the particular visible church. Such an officer must be free from unchastity, self-will, irascibility, intemperance, quarrelsomeness, and avarice; he must be positively hospitable, discreet, righteous, and holy; he must hold the true Christian doctrine as it came from Christ through the apostles, with an ability to edify the Church by such doctrine, and to confute gainsayers; he must be without scandal in his family, and in right attitude toward his selfhood, his neighbor, and his God.[1] But, as to how they shall secure and keep for their ministry this high condition of purity in doctrine and life, the New Testament largely leaves the churches to devise means as the results of experience require. The results of experience offer a somewhat conflicting testimony in respect to the value of different means. The inferences

[1] See Tit. i. 7–9, and compare 1 Tim. iii. 2–13 with the notes in Meyer's Handbuch.

made by different theorizers from the same results are quite diverse, and sometimes contradictory. We have before us, then, practical questions of considerable difficulty and doubtfulness, when we come to consider the principles of the true church polity as applied to the purity in the faith of its ministry. There are, in brief, no means given to Christians for keeping all men, or even all of their own teachers, always pure in doctrine and life: there are no means for wholly avoiding defections, scandals, heart-burnings, disgrace. Impurity in both doctrine and life is found in all churches and in the ministry of all church orders. Each church order can only do the best, on the whole possible, to prevent its accumulation, to purge it away when accumulated, and to bear its part of the common burden of shame.

The application of the above-mentioned principles to the purity in the faith of Congegational ministers must be made in the three following ways: —

I. This application must be made by training all our ministers to love, discern, and teach the whole truth of God, and especially the Word of God in redemption as that Word is revealed in the Scriptures, with a manly independence of human authorities and in humble reliance upon the Holy Spirit. The trained sense of primary responsibility to God alone is a safeguard of purity.

II. This application must also be made by cultivating in all our pastors a sense of their secondary responsibility to the congregations to whom they teach the truth of Christ; these congregations being regarded as able and obligated, together with their pastors, to know the doctrines of Scripture by intelligent study, and through enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. The cultivation of this sense of responsibility involves, (1) Right

ordination of the pastor at the hands of the Church, and (2) Right watch and care of the doctrine and life of the pastor by the Church.

III. This application must be made finally by so using the principle of the communion of churches as to cultivate in all our ministers a sense of tertiary responsibility to all the churches of their neighborhood and to all churches of Christ. This use involves, (1) the due acknowledgment of the principle of communion of churches in the ordination of every pastor; and (2) the subsequent watch and care of the doctrine and life of every minister by the entire sisterhood of churches.

The minister, as a learner and teacher of divine truth, owes primary allegiance, and is directly responsible, to God alone. As himself a believing spirit, and illumined by the divine Spirit, he goes to all sources of truth, but especially to the Scriptures, to determine what he shall hold for true, and what, as true, he shall teach to others. "Communion of the soul with God in his Word is the high school of theology," said the late Dr. J. P. Thompson; and "the holy unction" of the Congregational minister is "from a well-thumbed Bible."[1] "Holy Scripture," said Rev. John Wise, "that best, though not the biggest, of books, is the saint's library and the clergyman's pandects, whence he takes the rules for the management of his trust."[2]

It follows, then, that the relation between the education and the doctrinal purity of the ministry is very intimate. Defects in the education of Congregational pastors were one subordinate cause of the Unitarian schism: the founding and influence of this Andover

[1] See article in New-Englander, August, 1860, pp. 641 and 644, f.
[2] The Church's Quarrel Espoused, 5th Query of the Answer.

Theological Seminary is justly spoken of, by the Committee of Inquiry which the General Association of Massachusetts appointed in 1833, as one of the chief means by which that schism was arrested.[1] Whenever there has been a marked decline in the faith and fidelity of its ministers, the practice of Congregationalism has been to attribute it, in part, to faults or remissness in their education: the practice has also been to attempt the removal of the defects by the cure of the causes. A thoroughly educated ministry — educated, that is, by the best development of the powers of intellect through Christian learning, and of the powers of the heart through Christian communion with God and with one another — has always seemed to our church order as surest to be and to continue a sound and unblamable ministry. "Straggling illiterate teachers, . . . grossly unfurnished with ministerial gifts and knowledge," — to borrow language from an ordination sermon preached by Dr. Colman in 1746, — have never been in favor, have scarcely, indeed, been fairly treated, amongst New-England Congregationalists. It accords with our traditions, and, I believe, also accords with the facts of general experience, to hold that severe and protracted preparatory training tends to make a ministry orthodox in doctrine, and pure in life. This training should have for its result, not only to furnish the minister with a larger equipment of technical knowledge, but also to deepen the conviction of that primary and awful responsibility to God which he owes as a seeker and teacher of the most important and influential truths. To learn Latin enough to read a mass, to cultivate sufficient literary skill to produce one or two *sermonettes* or moral essays

[1] Historical Sketch of Congregational Churches in Massachusetts, Appendix, p. 311.

weekly, may leave a soul shallow and flippant still; but to grapple by grammar and lexicon and lecture, in prayer and conversation and solitary thought, with all those abstruse questions of criticism, those dark and deep problems of religious philosophy, and those solemn awe-inspiring teachings of Christian theology, which exercise the mind and heart of the devout student, tends, at least, to make a sober, discreet, and conscientious soul. The mind which has, under good leadership, been through some of these mazes, will not so readily set itself up as competent either to affirm or to deny the current views. It will shrink from violating modesty by giving itself out as a discoverer of some strange new doctrine; at the same time it will be cautious about committing itself to an announced and boasted championship of all that is old. And all the while it will be likely to pray much, and think much, and proclaim little; to walk modestly before all men, charitably with the brethren, and humbly in the sight of God. And, inasmuch as it believes with reason that all truth is from God, it will fearlessly accept all proven truth, and hold it in a sense of personal responsibility to him.

That training which best cultivates this sense of primary responsibility to God, and which, therefore, tends most to secure its subjects in purity of doctrine and life, will be fair and generous and broad. It will be willing to argue its case, and to show reasons for justifying the ways of God to man. It will not expect to dismiss all the difficulties of the laity, or to close the mouths of all objectors, by the teacher's *ipse dixit*, even when based upon an alleged divine *ipse dixit*. If it be true of our most successful evangelists that their success is due to this fact,—I quote, alas! the words of a Congrega-

tional pastor: "They *believe* the Bible, every book of it, every chapter, every verse, every line, every word; they never go back of it, never stop to argue it; they have no philosophy *about* the truth; they attempt no explanations of mysteries; they hold no arguments with unbelievers,"—still the educated minister will know better than to expect success in evangelizing by imitating the same ways. He will rather despise no truth, and no means of presenting the truth, which shall help to place men in that point of view where the beams from the one source of all light, as they come through so-called reason and through so-called revelation, may be seen to unite. And how can he refuse to answer objections, or argue his case, when the Apostle Paul has made the ability to confute gainsayers an indispensable prerequisite of his office? Young gentlemen, let me express to you my conviction, that the use you make of your seminary course will have more to do with keeping you sound in faith, and pure in life, than all the formal testings to which you will subsequently be made subject by the appointed ecclesiastical means. It is also my conviction, that satisfactory conduct as a Christian student and a Christian gentleman, in all the course of training for the ministry of the gospel, should be much more carefully exacted than it now is by all councils and associations in licensing and ordaining ministers.

The Congregational pastor, as the teacher and leader of his congregation, owes a secondary but most important allegiance to his own church. It is in accordance with the two fundamental principles of the true church polity to argue that the community of believing souls is spiritually illumined to discern the truth of God's Word, and so is fitted to test their teacher and his teachings by that Word. One of the Five Articles

which the papal bishops submitted to the Parliament of 1559, as setting forth the imperishable essence of the Romish faith, was that no authority in matters of faith and discipline is to be conceded to the laity. The Congregational principle is the exact reverse of this: all authority in matters of faith and discipline is, not simply to be conceded, but of right belongs — under the headship of Christ, and in the enjoyment of the illumining of the Spirit, and in accordance with the norm of faith and discipline furnished by the Scriptures — to the laity. It is doubtless most salutary to keep before the minds of the ministry their dependence, under God, upon the community of believers for the testing of their doctrine. We shall never have a satisfactory theory of inspiration until full acknowledgment is made of this truth: the gifts of the Spirit, and the discernment of those gifts, are committed to the community of believers. This is equally true of the inspiration of the Bible and of all Christian inspiration. The feeling of dependence upon the people for salary, for applause, for preferment in office, is misleading and unmanly. The feeling of dependence upon the people of Christ for the discernment and testing of the truths taught is for the teacher a most helpful and ennobling experience. Moreover, Christian congregations should be trained to reason with and rebuke the pastors who preach unsound doctrine: Christian pastors should show themselves thoroughly enough Christian to heed the reasoning, and submit with humility to the rebuke. The pastor who feels himself most loftily elevated above his own church in knowledge of the doctrine of Christ is most ill fitted to be their pastor. To what lengths of unreason and discourtesy a minister may be carried by wholly forgetting the essential nature of his relations to the people,

some of our own controversial books and pamphlets may make us aware.[1] The clergy have always a certain tendency to grow clannish, to see things in the light of class relations, and ecclesiastical customs and formulas. They are tempted to be sticklers for minutiæ of doctrine, or else rather loud-mouthed announcers of new discoveries in theological science. They are apt to run wholly imaginary lines through their own corporation, and thus crudely classify themselves as orthodox and heretical, liberal and bigoted, sound and shaky. Now, if we are to classify Congregational pastors apart from their brethren in the churches, and then call them, "the clergy," we must hold that the highest allegiance under God of this class, the clergy, is to the other class, the laity, in all Congregational churches. In 1730 a committee of the New North Church was appointed to examine a candidate for settlement as pastor, "concerning his Christian principles, both doctrinal and disciplinary." A revival and heightening, by means of such an examination, of the sense of responsibility on the part of the pastor to the church which he teaches, would do much toward securing purity in the doctrine and life of our ministry. It is no unwarrantable assumption for any congregation to require of the candidate for its pastorate a full statement *made to them* of his doctrinal belief and religious experience.

Besides his primary allegiance to Christ, and his secondary responsibility to his own church, the Congregational minister has a certain tertiary allegiance and responsibility to the Church of Christ at large. This allegiance is acknowledged, and this responsibility se-

[1] As, e.g., a pamphlet printed in 1794, entitled Congregationalism as contained in the Scriptures, explained by the Cambridge Platform, where the removal of a Congregational pastor is likened to the deposition of a priest by a Jewish king.

cured, in the case of the *pastor*, by the communion of his church with sister Congregational churches. As a pastor, he has no responsibility, and owes no allegiance whatever to his fellow-ministers as such, but to them as delegated representatives of sister-churches. No Congregational minister, whatever his position or title, can assume the right to inspect the faith of any pastor; nor can any number of ministers assume any jurisdiction over any single pastor. But the ordaining and installing of pastors of Congregational churches, and, as well, the subsequent care of their purity in faith and life, is committed to the sister-churches by the first, second, third, and sixth ways of communion.[1]

The second and third means for conserving the purity of Congregational ministers, viz., the care of the particular visible church over its own pastor, and the care of the sisterhood of churches over their pastors, cover and shield two important epochs. The first of these is the epoch in which the minister becomes pastor of a Congregational church: the second is the sad and dangerous epoch when he becomes notably or obviously impure in morals, or unsound in faith. The local church and the communion of churches are intimately interested in both these epochs: in the determining of the difficult questions which accompany both these epochs, the local church and the sister-churches should take appropriate parts. Only in this union of effort is it possible to use both these means to promote the desired end.

We consider, then, at some length, the Congregational doctrine of the ordination of the pastor.

When a Congregational church has made choice of a pastor, it is in accordance with the example of the New Testament, and with the principles and most time-

[1] Cambridge Platform, chap. xv. sect. 2.

honored customs of our polity, that this chosen pastor should be formally and solemnly inducted into his office. It is agreed by all that the primary and constitutive act for establishing the pastorate is that choice of the body of believers which summons the person chosen to its leadership in Christian teaching and work. To this must, of course, be added the pastor's acceptance of the choice of the church. "Mutual election," says Increase Mather, "is that which doth essentiate the relation of a pastor to this or that particular church."[1] Ordination is, therefore, the formal act confessing and ratifying this choice. "This ordination we account," says the Cambridge Platform,[2] "nothing else, but the solemn putting a man into his place and office in the church, whereunto he had right before by election; being like the installing of a magistrate in the commonwealth." The elements of this solemn act of induction were, in the New Testament, two; viz., the prayer, and the imposition of hands; the latter being, as the text shows us, an additional ceremony, and not a merely symbolical accompaniment of the prayer.[3] This ceremony of the imposition of hands had served the Jews, since the time of Mosaism, as a symbol and means of the imparting of divine grace and divine power in consecration for the sacred offices of the Hebrew Church.[4] In the Apostolic Church it was regarded as both symbol and means of special divine grace.[5] The New-Testament imposition of hands is undoubtedly regarded by its

[1] Sermon at the ordination of Mr. Appleton. [2] Chap. ix. sect. 2.

[3] See Acts vi. 6, and Meyer's note (καί, etc. . . . τότε, etc.), and compare Acts viii. 17.

[4] See Num. xxvii. 18, and Ewald's Alterth., p. 47.

[5] See Meyer on Acts vi. 6; Schaff, Apostolic Church, p. 502; art. Handauflegung, in Herzog and Plitt; Neander, Planting and Training, p. 154, f.; Meyer's Handbuch; 1 Tim. iv. 14.

authors as dynamic. Many of the writers of Congregationalism, in their zeal to guard against the doctrine that imposition of hands is "intended as a conveyance of office power," have been betrayed into extreme and erroneous statements.[1] Yet the practice of the fathers was, in the respect of laying-on of hands, quite uniform. The question, whether these acts of ordination are necessary to constitute one chosen to that office the true pastor of a Congregational Church, has been often and elaborately debated. It is not now necessary to review the debate. Two points upon which conviction may be fastened are these: the choice of the local church is the primal and essential element of pastoral ordination; and this formal act of induction should occur as often as the choice to the office recurs. The choice is necessary to constitute the office of the pastorate; the ceremony of ordination, with at least its two essential elements of prayer and imposition of hands, is necessary to a *decent* and *orderly induction* into that office. In these essential regards the true church polity knows no difference between installation and ordination.

Granting, then, that this solemn act of induction is in accordance with the example of the New Testament and with the ancient and honorable customs of Congregationalism, the question arises, By whom shall the act be initiated? To this question only one answer can be given. The right and obligation both to initiate and to consummate the ordination with its appropriate service, and symbolic impartation of divine gifts, rest where the original and primal element of ordination abides: they rest, that is to say, with the local church. The

[1] As, for example, that the imposition of hands had to do only with the conveying of miraculous gifts: it is, therefore, an obsolete ceremony. So Isaac Chauncey, Div. Inst. of Congregational Churches, pp. 74–83.

right and privilege and obligation to induct into office are with the people who elect to the office: the blame and shame and risk are with them in case they neglect or refuse thus to consummate their choice. Whoever, therefore, prays and lays on hands at the ordaining of a Congregational pastor, does so as invited and delegated by the ordaining church. The right of the ordaining council is always a delegated right.[1]

But to whom, we inquire further, does the Church most fitly delegate this right? In the practice of the New Testament they who imposed hands were the apostles or their delegates, the presbyter-bishops of the churches, and, in the case of the induction of Paul and Barnabas into their great missionary work, the Christian prophets and teachers; these all always acting in the name and behalf of the body of believers. The apostles are not with us, and their vicegerents, or successors in unbroken line, we cannot discover, even if we felt them necessary for use in valid ordination. Both the practice of the New Testament,[2] and the ancient practice of our church order, lead us to conclude that the elders of the local church which has chosen the new officer are the persons fittest, in the name and behalf of the church, to induct him into his office. Says the chapter on discipline in the Savoy Confession, "The way of ordaining officers is . . . with fasting and prayer, and imposition of hands of the eldership of the church." And says the Cambridge Platform,[3] "In such churches where there are elders, imposition of hands in ordination is to be performed by those elders."

[1] See Historical Sketch of Congregational Churches in Mass., p. 23.

[2] The college of elders referred to 1 Tim. iv. 14, and who imposed hands upon Timothy, were, at least for the most part, officers of the local church which ordained him. See Grimm's lexicon and Meyer's Handbuch.

[3] Chap. ix. sect. 3.

This right of the local church to ordain its own pastor by the laying-on of the hands of its own college of elders does not, however, remove its obligation, in the act of ordination, to have communion with neighboring churches. Even in the case of Timothy it is at least a fair question whether the ordaining college of elders did not comprise, also, certain officers of other churches, since, as we know, it did include the apostle Paul.[1] If our Congregational churches in these days were so furnished as to be able to ordain their own pastors at the hands of their own elders, the real communion of churches need not be diminished by this form of ordination.

I am ready, then, to give again, most emphatically, the advice of Rev. John Wise: "Furnish your churches with (ruling) elders." Unfortunately, as it seems to me, and in a mistaken departure from New-Testament usage, our churches have, in general, no college of presbyter-bishops to act in their behalf. We cannot say, as did the Independents in the Westminster Assembly, "There is a sufficient presbytery for ordination in every congregation." The pastor as an elder cannot lay hands on his own head as a pastor. The question then recurs for an answer, Who shall stand for the church in consummating its ordaining choice by the ordaining prayer and by the imposition of hands?

There is abundant evidence[2] to the truth, that, by confessed application of Congregational principles, the

[1] See 2 Tim. i. 6. "Paul," says De Wette, who is quoted with approval by Meyer, "conjointly with the elders, and, indeed, as the first among them, administered the imposition of hands." Some commentators, as, e.g., Moeller (in De Wette) and Ellicott, speak of this πρεσβυτέριον as composed of the elders of the *place* (Lystra or Ephesus) where the ordination was.

[2] See Congregational Dictionary, pp. 285, ff., and the references there given.

congregation of believers *may* proceed to consummate their own choice, inducting, by the "most fit members" and means they have at disposal, their chosen pastor into his office. "In such churches where there are no elders," says the Platform,[1] "imposition of hands may be performed by some of the brethren orderly chosen by the church thereunto." It has been held, however, that only extraordinary circumstances and extreme cases could justify the resort to lay-ordination. Among such circumstances and cases are instanced, by Barrowe, the case of apostasy so general that no true elders are anywhere to be found; by Richard Mather and W. Tompson, the case where elders cannot be conveniently borrowed from any other church. Indeed, the views of the so-called authorities have differed upon this whole subject, from that of President Stiles, who says,[2] "It was a mistaken notion of our fathers that the power of ordination was in the church by the elders," to that of Davenport, who declares,[3] "Their ordination of officers . . . is an act of the power of the keys residing in them;" from that of Ainsworth, who maintains,[4] "That ministers of one particular church should ordain elders for another church is more unorderly than when every church ordaineth them itself," to the opposite opinion of Increase Mather,[5] who supposes lay-ordination valid indeed, but, when elders may be attained, not decent.[6]

[1] Cambridge Platform, chap. ix. sect. 4.

[2] Election Sermon.

[3] Hanbury, II. p. 64.

[4] Reply to Johnson, Hanbury, I. p. 252.

[5] Vindication of New-England Churches, p. 100.

[6] Owen's view may be learned from the following passages: "For that part of it (ordination) which consists in the imposition of hands by the presbytery. . . I think it necessary by virtue of *precept* and that (it ought) to be continued by way of *succession*. It is, I say, according to the mind of Christ, that he who is to be ordained into office in any church receive imposition of hands from the elders of that church, if

Ordination by the congregation alone, and without communion with other churches, has unfrequently, although not very rarely, been practised by New-England Congregationalism. The most notable cases are, perhaps, those of Rev. Francis Higginson and Rev. Samuel Skelton as pastor and teacher of the First Church in Salem,[1] and, thirty years later, of Rev. John Higginson as pastor over the same church.[2] The churches at Charlestown, Lynn, and Woburn, have each practised lay-ordination.[3] In the case of Francis Higginson and Samuel Skelton, we are told that the former, and "three or four more of the gravest members of the church," laid hands on the latter, and then himself received imposition of hands in the same manner. Of John Higginson it is said that Major Hawthorne and the deacons imposed hands upon him in the presence of the neighboring churches and elders.

Lay-ordination is now an obsolete ceremony. Cotton Mather represents it, as, even in his time, having gone into disuse. But it cannot, therefore, be called uncongregational or unscriptural; and circumstances may still

there be any therein; and this is to be done in a way of succession, that so the churches may be perpetuated" (Works, XIII. p. 219). "But how far any people or church may commit over the power of declaring their consent and acquiescency unto others to act for them, as it were in their stead, so as that the call to office should yet be valid, and provided the former rules be observed, I will not dispute with any, though I approve only of what maketh the nearest approaches to the primitive pattern that the circumstances of things are capable of" (Works, IV. p. 495, f.).

[1] Genesis of New-England Churches, p. 473. The first authority is Gott's letter to Bradford, Massachusetts Historical Collection, III. p. 67, f.

[2] President Stiles's claim, that he never found with certainty more than one instance of the lay-ordination of a person *never before ordained*, does not cover the question, as the words Italicized by me will show.

[3] See Hutchinson, History of Massachusetts, I. p. 10, f.; Historical Sketch, etc., p. 14; Eliot, History of Massachusetts (Historical Society Collection, series I. vol. ix. p. 39).

arise in which its practice will be the privilege and even the duty of Congregationalists. Should the centralizing tendency be carried too far, and the demands of ordaining councils become too complex and onerous, the custom may fitly be revived. Pastors so ordained will not, *for that reason solely*, cease to be Congregational pastors orderly inducted into office: churches so ordaining their pastors will not, *for that reason solely*, cease to be Congregational churches in good standing.

But let it not be forgotten that there is a wide difference between the deliberate and conscientious practice, on due occasion, of lay-ordination, and the careless, slovenly disregard of all ordination whatever. Such disregard, now wide-spread among our churches, leads to disesteem of the pastoral office; is, unlike lay-ordination, connected with open disrespect of the plainest rules for the communion of churches; and tends toward unsoundness of the ministry in doctrine, and looseness in morals. Every church which wishes to act in an orderly and scriptural way should consummate its choice of a pastor — for no matter what length of time chosen — by an act of solemn induction into his pastoral office. For this act no burdensome and elaborate service is necessary. The indispensable elements of the act are simply the prayer of consecration and the imposition of hands. And every church (if such church is now to be found) which regards itself as unable to commune with its sister-churches in ordaining its pastor, whether on account of great inconvenience, or definite risk to its liberties, should duly and prayerfully resort to lay-ordination. Every such church should, in the midst of a day of fasting and supplication, by "most fit members" "orderly chosen," consecrate its pastor in public prayer, and lay holy hands upon his head as a symbol and means

of divine blessing. And should the hand of one of the elders, or other fit members chosen, have, as it is said to have happened in the ordination of Israel Chauncey, a leathern mitten upon it, to be blessed with such imposition of hands is far better than to have, as pastor of that particular visible church, an unblessed head. Let me here commend this course to every pastor-elect. If he be elect only for a single year, he should wisely insist upon having his election consummated with ordination; and if the church be unwilling to call a council in our present somewhat too cumbersome fashion, let them ordain the pastor themselves. To their most fit members orderly chosen, and *coram ecclesia*, let the pastor-elect make confession of faith and profession of experience, for examination as to his fitness to be their pastor; and by them, in behalf of the church, let him be inducted into his office. This course I commend, not having before my eyes the fear of the author of a certain pamphlet,[1] who thinks that the "Pious Patriarchs" were "drove into" a mistake upon the question of ordination; who accuses the Cambridge Platform of obscurity, commends President Stiles for tracing our ordinations in the line of presbyters up to the apostolic age, and declares that the witness of the General Court and the Synod of 1662 "ought to silence and shame all those schismatics who arrogantly and insolently pretend to patronize their disorderly Independent sentiments and conduct by the platform." I am of the opinion, however, that ordination by the "leathern mitten" makes a man more completely a pastor by far than the utter lack of ordination, now so prevalent, suffers him to be.

The practice of ordination should, however, be modi-

[1] Congregationalism as contained in the Scriptures, etc., Boston, January, 1794.

fied and fixed in accordance with the principle of the communion of churches. In the feeling of this truth the practice of historic Congregationalism has been much more uniform than its variety of opinion would lead us to suppose possible. This practice has ordinarily secured the presence and assistance of neighboring churches in the ordaining of the chosen pastor. These elders and messengers of other churches can never, it must not be forgotten, have other than a delegated work and an authority of influence. They ought, also, to combine with themselves, even in the ordaining prayer and in the imposition of hands, the assistance of the officers of the church to which they come, whenever this is possible. Recognition of the principle of communion of churches was, however, made in most even of those earliest cases of lay-ordination. Of the First Church in Salem, in the case of Higginson and Skelton, we are told, "Notice was given of their intended proceedings to the church at New Plymouth (then their only neighbor), that so they might have their approbation and concurrence, if not their direction and assistance, in a matter of that nature."[1] When the same church ordained Rev. John Higginson by Major Hawthorne and others, it was done in the presence of the elders and messengers from the churches of Ipswich, Lynn, Reading, and Boston, who, by the act of Mr. Norton, teacher of the church of Boston, gave the right hand of fellowship.[2] And in November, 1683, the same church ordained Mr. Noys as teacher "by imposition of hands of the pastor, and Mr. Hubbard of Ipswich, and Mr. Phillips of Rowly."[3]

[1] See Hubbard's History, p. 118; Morton's New-England Memorial, p. 145; Magnalia I., iv. 6.

[2] Account taken from the original records, and found in New-England Congregationalism, etc., p. 46.

[3] Ibid., p. 89.

The practice of ordination by help of the ministers of sister-churches has, indeed, no direct warrant from the usage of the New Testament. It is not, for that reason, contrary to the principles of a true church polity as derived from the New Testament. Indeed, it may, when rightly practised, be regarded as a most happy and safe means of harmonizing the principle of the autonomy of the local church and the principle of the communion of churches, as well as the most available and sure means of securing and preserving the purity in doctrine and life of the ministry. The customs of our church order have now for a considerable time been in this respect nearly uniform. "Nevertheless," says the Cambridge Platform,[1] "in such churches where there are no elders, and the church so desire, we see not why imposition of hands may not be performed by the elders of other churches." The modern practice decides rather to have no elders besides the pastor in any of the particular churches, and, in case of ordination, to call upon the elders of neighboring churches.

What, then, is the nature of that communion between churches which is practicable where a pastor is ordained by the elders of other churches? and how far does this communion operate to secure and conserve the purity in faith and life of the ministry? In reply we may say, first, that the bare presence of the officers and members of other churches to witness the ceremony of ordination is by no means without influence. The common interest in the transaction is thus acknowledged: the manifestation of this common interest is a safeguard and encouragement to the pastor and church most intimately interested.

According to our present custom, however, it is the

[1] Chap. ix. sect. 5.

examination through which the churches summoned expect to exert their influence toward securing and preserving a faithful ministry in the church that issues the summons. The examination by the elders of other churches for ordination as pastor is not found in early Congregationalism: it is, indeed, very doubtful whether it would have been in accordance with the notions then prevalent of propriety and rights. The pastor, like every member of the church, and, on account of his prominence in office, more especially than any other, was expected to manifest before his own church his integrity in the faith. The doctrinal soundness of the earliest pastors was rarely questioned: no occasion for such questioning arose. Indeed, the *earliest* pastors came to their churches in New England as men already tried and found trustworthy in the ministry of the gospel. Later on we begin to find evidences of effort to examine more carefully the candidates for ordination as pastors: we find, also, complaints of councils for neglecting such an examination. In 1699 Increase Mather and nine others sent forth their "Advice unto the churches of New England," — "to beware of running after new preachers of whose endowments and principles they have not had a reasonable attestation." In this "Advice" they express their intention not to admit any stranger into their pulpits without passing him through "a solemn examination of his capacity." From the footnote of a sermon preached by Dr. Hopkins in 1768 we learn of his fear that ordaining councils were beginning "to neglect the examination of candidates for the ministry with respect to their religious sentiments."[1] It was probably the Unitarian controversy which served to fix the custom, as it now

[1] See Historical Sketch, etc., p. 197, f.

exists, of examining every candidate for ordination as pastor of a Congregational church. To this custom the principles of a true church polity oppose no objection, so long as they are not themselves violated by the nature of the examination. The ordaining council should, however, never forget the fact that they are acting as delegates under commission, and in behalf of the church which invited them. But they have the right, and upon them is laid the obligation, to use reasonable means to discover whether the facts will warrant them in giving the advice desired, executing the act planned for, and pledging the fellowship of the community of churches. This examination is, therefore, in its present form, a somewhat late invention: it can never be regarded as other than an adventitious and temporary resource, rather than an essential element of Congregational ordination. In its details it is necessarily subject to constant change: now one point of doctrine may need to be most pressed, and now another: in many cases, all detailed examination may most wisely be omitted. The entire practice may at no distant day cease, and ordination be, on that account, no less valid and safe. But, as long as the examination is regarded by the communing churches and pastors in the light of a requisite to safe and hearty communion, it should be cheerfully submitted to by the ordaining church and by the candidate for ordination.

That the real nature and desired effect of this examination may be made apparent, we give it still further attention.[1] No rules for its conduct which shall beforehand determine all cases can reasonably be given: none

[1] For a full statement of the items which make up the work of an ordaining council, we must refer to the manuals, especially to Dr. Dexter's Congregationalism, pp. 171, ff.

such are to be accepted by whomsoever given. Certain principles of Christian rationality, courtesy, and good sense, should govern all cases. The real object of the examination in doctrinal belief should always be kept in view: it is to have real communion with the ordaining church, and by this communion to secure a more faithful ministry. The act of ordination looks toward the future in two directions, — toward the watch and care of this particular pastor, and toward the purity in doctrine and life of all the churches. The examination for ordination as pastor is, therefore, essentially unlike the examination for licensure. The latter should be much more exacting and comprehensive than it usually is. It should search into the sufficiency of the candidate's literary acquisitions, his ability to expound the Bible, to define and defend his views, not only of biblical truth, but also of critical, dogmatic, and metaphysico-religious opinions. It should especially have regard to the fitness and motive of the candidate for becoming a minister at all. But the main object of the examination for ordination as a pastor is quite different from all this. This examination receives its candidate as an already accredited minister of the gospel. Its intent is to determine whether he is so fit for the pastorate of a particular church that advice can be given to this church to consummate its ordaining choice with the formal act of ordination, and whether the sister churches represented can pledge themselves to commune with this church on the basis of their act in ordaining this particular man as their pastor. The attempt to determine these questions chiefly by a detailed examination in the various branches of theological science is out of place, unless, indeed, there is ground to believe that the examination for licensure

was altogether untrustworthy, or that the views of the candidate have, since licensure, essentially changed in some important particular. Doubtless in far too many cases there *is* ground for believing that the previous work of examination has not been thoroughly done. But in itself the sight of a body of ministers with ear-trumpets in ears, and like the good old Scotch woman in the case of Norman McCleod, making their man "gang ouer the fundamentals," is not demonstrably the indispensable thing at an ordination service. "Going over the fundamentals" is an exceedingly good practice for Congregational pastors. It is not, however, by any means necessary as a basis upon which they may give safe advice to a Congregational church in the matter of ordaining its pastor.

Until, however, we are more reasonably confident in the thoroughness of the inquiries which precede approbating to preach at all, our customs are not likely to conform strictly to the reasonableness of a pure theory. That a minister who comes with a clear record to the office of pastor in any particular church is sound in the faith, and upright in life, should always be assumed by an ordaining council. The pushing of the candidate to the wall by sharp sword-practice, the display of skill in witty repartee, the stalwart gymastics in dogmatics and metaphysics, the effort to confuse and entrap, — these are not helpful ways of communion in love with brother-ministers and sister-churches. The occurrence of each opportunity to examine for ordination should, however, afford means for keeping our ministry pure. If the candidate is by common rumor believed to have taught, or if he is intending to teach, views the compatibility of which with the fullest enjoyment of the communion of neighboring churches is matter of doubt, then those

views should be frankly stated, fully discussed so far as their bearing upon the case in hand is concerned, and submitted to the council as constituting a part of its rational ground of advice. With the private studies and conclusions upon doubtful points of biblical criticism or speculative theology which belong to the candidate, the council has nothing whatever to do. It must, as well as the candidate, conduct the whole matter so as best to guard against the malignant canker of professional dishonesty, which is the more fatal, the more it is covered over with the plaster of an unintelligent and unhearty confession, or anointed with the salve of Jesuitical casuistry.

Moreover, certain questions quite customarily left in the background should be brought conspicuously forward in every examination for ordination as pastor. Does the candidate enter the *pastorate of this particular visible church* with purity and zeal of intent, to serve all the people with his whole heart? Is the mutual attitude of pastor and people one of such esteem, confidence, and unity in love, as promises success? Does the leader intend to spur and lead the church in Christian activities? Will he make the church a missionary church as well as keep it an orthodox church? Will he lead the people in Christ's love and care for the poor? Will he take his place, and lead his church to take its place, in all the practical exercises of the communion of churches? If ordaining councils examined both the church and the pastor upon these matters of the life-blood, the imposition of hands would be, as it was in apostolic times, both a *means* and a symbol of blessing.

Closely connected with our inquiry into the nature of the examination stands this other inquiry, What

measure of agreement in doctrinal belief should be required between the ordaining council and the church and pastor requesting the act of ordination? In answer I make the three following remarks: —

1. The subject of agreement is as to truths taught in the name of the Scriptures and of Christ to the people, and not as to private opinions held upon doubtful matters of critical or speculative inquiry. Agreement, then, should be required as to the alleged divine truth to be taught, and not as to matters of private opinion. The teaching of the pulpit should conduce to the same twofold end toward which the church is moving forward in history. This teaching should edify the church, and convert the world. To teach the Mosaic or the non-Mosaic authorship of the entire Pentateuch has little real tendency to promote these ends. Granted the fair assumption that the teaching of every pastor will be honest teaching, the inquiry after agreement should concern this teaching.

2. The extent of agreement should be as to the fundamentals of Christian doctrine, and not as to the details of opinion. This statement does not, indeed, define any fixed method of procedure, or guarantee any definite result; for even Congregational pastors differ as to what is fundamental. That which appears as fundamental in one age, the next age regards as matter of opinion. The Edwardean theory of the will has been considered in some regions as necessary for a Congregational pastor: to hold what may now be regarded as the dominant view of that theory has made heresiarchs of good and notable men.[1] At present we are occupied in determining how far a particular view of the nature of future punishment, or a special form of

[1] Compare Professor Park's Fitness of the Church, p. 41, f.

theory for the great fact of atonement, is a requisite for our ministry. No settlement, but that which comes in history as the church under the leadership of the Holy Spirit is enabled to stand at those points of view where reason and Scripture unite, can be a final settlement of these questions. It is, however, our duty to be alert to the answer of all these questions; and as that answer comes to us will our duty be made clear. Assent to the truths taught by the Word of God in Scripture *as fundamental truths of Redemption* must be made a basis of the communion of churches. Such assent must be required of every Christian teacher. In determining what truths are so fundamental as to make assent to them requisite, each ordaining council in each act must use the best light it can obtain. In its work it should ask and expect light from the Spirit of all light.

3. An ordaining council should be more ready to concede that the local church has been divinely directed in the choice of a pastor than to press objections, or obtrude fears. To advise a church against its deliberate choice is always a difficult and dangerous task; yet would there be no meaning in asking advice, and no sense in ordination by council, and no reality in this form of the communion of churches, if such advice may not at times be boldly and kindly given. Captious and dictatorial manners are always bad manners. But the hand of fellowship should never be given in shamming. The refusal to approve should be frank and fearless where the charitable heart cannot approve. The refusal should be on the ground of the incompatibility of the candidate's views and conduct with truth, and not with any factitious standards of truth. This genuine communion of churches in ordaining pastors will do much to conserve and fortify the doctrinal and

moral soundness of our ministry. And let me not fail to add, that immorality, even if it be only those commoner forms of irascibility, quarrelsomeness, and avarice, lack of love for the good and of discretion in Christian work, with which the ministry are most vexed, should be much more closely scrutinized and sharply rebuked than minor errors of opinion. Can we forget that the apostle distinctly forbids the pastorate to those who conspicuously offend in these things? A quarrel with his church and an unchristian farewell-sermon should make any minister's next settlement a difficult affair. It should have more influence with an ordaining council than his merely critical opinions.

The inquiry now arises, How shall we defend the validity of this safeguard and the reasonableness of our polity, when divers councils give diverse answers to the same questions? What if one pastor be ordained in New Jersey, and another candidate holding similar views be refused ordination in Maine? What if the same man who fails to gain ordination at the hands of one council receive it at the hands of another? What if advice contradict advice, and council contravene council? Conflicts of law and diverse advices and decisions are not peculiar to Congregationalism. If Meyer correct De Wette, or Hengstenberg and Ewald fail to agree over a Psalm, we do not, therefore, abjure all commentaries. If the decision of the Lower Court be appealed, and reversed by the Supreme Court, we do not, therefore, decry all human judicial proceedings. If the synod be apppealed to from the presbytery, and reverse its decision, and then the troublesome question be actually carried to the highest form of the court of Jesus Christ, and if angry words, shameful passions, cross-purposes, and contradictory judgments, distress the General As-

sembly, even then we restrain our impulse to exhort all people, Beware of Presbyterianism. These embryonic truths will come to their full growth only through the midwifery of discussion and experience. The pains of the process are escaped by no means of ordering churches: they are better borne, we believe, in the New-Testament way than in any other. He has an inherent fault in vision who longs to see the gilt robe of some infallible Roman pontiff, and does not rather choose the variety of coloring which unites to make the white light that must shine from the sun of all truth.

Our discussion of ordination to the pastorate as a means by which the churches secure and maintain purity in doctrine and life among their pastors, has been comparatively lengthy on account of the importance of the theme. This epoch in the life of every pastor brings under the review of the church ordaining him, and of the churches communing with it in that act, his fitness to be regarded as a sound and pure minister of Christ. It should impress upon the pastor his responsibility to his own church and to all other Christian churches. It should pledge his church, and all churches in communion for this purpose with it, to a faithful and loving care of him in the future.

The practical value and use of this safeguard have at present sunk very low through wide-spread neglect of all formal ordination. How shall pastoral ordination guard our pastors when it comes to pass that none of them are as pastors ordained? The suggestion of certain remedies for this evil custom of neglecting ordination is, therefore, due to the importance of our theme.

Ministers must be taught that the act of induction into office by prayer and imposition of hands is necessary to an *orderly holding* of their office. We cannot

deny that uninstalled ministers may be called the pastors of the churches to which they preach. The mutual choice is the necessary element to constitute a pastorate. But they are *not pastors orderly inducted into office*, until they are ordained to that office. And upon the true principle of the identity of ordination and installation a former ordination has no effect to induct one orderly into a new office; to this end there must be the ordination (installation) which is specifically for the case in hand. Let them, then, irrespective of the question of permanency, seek ordination at the hands of their church. Let them be ordained by the leathern mitten of the laity rather than not at all.

Churches must be instructed so as to know that *they* are not walking orderly when they do not ordain their ministers with prayer, and imposition of hands. To the end of instruction they should be lovingly exhorted, and even rebuked, by their sister-churches who are walking in an orderly way. Pamphlets and articles explaining the right grounds of Congregational ordination should be pressed upon the attention of delinquent churches. The refusal to ordain may even be made a ground for using the third way of communion with a church, or perhaps, in the last resort, for withdrawing fellowship from it.

Councils called to advise regarding the ordaining of a pastor should remember that their conduct will largely determine the revival or disuse of our New-Testament and time-honored custom. Discretion and charity on their part will make the custom thrive: indiscretion and uncharitableness will make the custom more obnoxious, and, finally, perhaps obsolete.

Moreover, the act of ordination should be greatly simplified. It is at present far too formal, complex,

and onerous. The great number of invited guests, the notable preacher bringing his brilliant special sermon from a distant horizon,[1] the lengthy and puzzling practice of theological gymnastics, the "fuss and the feathers," are not essential elements of Congregational ordination. They are, indeed, weights, and not wings, to our practice. The people say, — and who can blame them? — it is too much trouble for so brief an arrangement. All that is necessary in any case to acknowledge duly every principle involved is for the ordaining church to invite the two or three churches who are their next neighbors to unite with them in setting apart their pastor by a prayer and the laying-on of hands. And when our churches can be induced to give heed to the question, whether the men whom they receive as candidates for the pastorate are fit persons to preach the gospel to them at all, and to induct in simple but thorough New-Testament fashion their chosen pastors into their office, then we shall be able to test the value of ordination in securing and conserving the purity of our ministry. For this right practice as a safeguard to the purity of the ministry, there is no substitute known to our church order. Our first concern, therefore, should be to secure ordination as a universal and obligatory rather than an occasional and adventitious custom. And to accomplish this we must strip it of its accumulated embarrassments, and faithfully commend it, in its naked purity, to the favor of the churches.

The second epoch at which the care of the local church over its own pastor, and the watch of the fel-

[1] There was at first no sermon preached at ordination; afterward the minister ordained usually preached. For instances of this custom, see Congregational Dictionary, p. 291, and compare Massachusetts Historical Society Collection, series I. vol. ix. p. 12, note.

lowship of churches, must be in a formal way evoked to keep a pure ministry, occurs whenever any minister becomes obviously impure in morals, or unsound in faith. We speak now only of such watch and care as can be rendered by the churches, through their pastors or lay delegates, to the ministry at large. For this the most important means is the faithful dealing of the local church with its own pastor. If Christian teachers know that their churches are intelligent, conscientious, alert with regard to the doctrine they hear, and modest, unselfish, scrupulous, as to the moral character of him who indoctrinates them, the purity in faith and life of these teachers will be greatly increased by such knowledge. No amount or kind of ecclesiastical machinery can keep the ministry pure, can even be shown to tend to keep it pure, if those covenanted together in the local church care more for the pew-rentals than for the purity of their own pastors. The disposition toward unscrupulous use of any means requisite to attain a semblance of success is at present manifest in the churches no less surely than in business and in politics. No medicating will cure this disposition: while it endures it will evade the power of drugs. But it may be eradicated by the concurrent exercise of all the powers of all the righteous. Let, then, every pastor remember that his highest responsibility, next to God, is to the people of his charge, both for the doctrine he teaches them, and for the life he leads before them. Since Paul could warn all Christians not to follow him astray, and could submit his teaching to that testing which an inspired church may make of even apostolic words, by comparing them with the mind of Christ, no Congregational pastor need feel dignity or pride offended, if his people constantly test him as the apos-

tle wished always to be tested. And should it become obvious to any church that their pastor has essentially departed from sound faith or upright living, they are in no small degree criminal, if they do not faithfully and lovingly deal with him in the appointed way. Moreover, if the departure is as yet only alleged, and not to their minds obvious, they still owe it to themselves, their pastor, their sister-churches, and the cause of Christ, to take due notice of what is notable, and matter of common report.

The community of churches also has means of acting upon each Congregational pastor, whenever this epoch of obvious departure from sound teaching or pure morals shall have occurred. Every one of the six ways of communion laid down by the Cambridge Platform[1] may suggest and furnish such means. One principle, however, viz., that of the autonomy of the local church, must invariably be respected in the use of all these means. Other churches can deal with the minister of a particular visible church, *as a pastor*, only through the church of which he is the pastor. The first way of the communion of churches is always in place: this is "by way of mutual care, in taking thought for one another's welfare." The consistent and habitual use of this way by neighbor churches would make comparatively easy the use of more definite means in the epoch under our consideration. In case the church troubled with a notably unsound or impure minister ask "the judgment and counsel of other churches," such help as is asked should be faithfully and lovingly rendered: this is the second way of communion. But in case they do not ask, or, having once asked, refuse to heed the sound advice given, the third way, the "way of admonition,"

[1] Chap. xv. sect. 2.

may be evoked. When this way must be employed as means of securing a pure ministry, the greatest care and delicacy are necessary to blend rightly the two principles involved: these two are the principle of the autonomy of the local church and the principle of the communion of churches; for in this way of communion these principles often seem to be mutually exclusive and contradictory. The attention of the neglecting church should, first of all, be more carefully and tenderly called to the apparent neglect. If neglect of attention be followed by explicit or virtual refusal of attention, admonition may issue as the next act. Continued neglect or refusal may compel the subsequent steps, which, following closely the path laid down by Christ for the discipline of an offending member, may at last terminate in the united and deliberate act of a council of neighboring churches, declaring the offending church "to be obstinate." Lastly follows the declaration of "the sentence of non-communion" from the "particular churches approving and accepting the judgment" of the council. Thereafter the churches which have withdrawn fellowship cease to hold communion as churches with the offending church in any of the more formal ways of communion. They do not consult with it in union meetings, or in common councils or synods; they no longer give and receive admonition for subsequent faults; they do not receive its pastor into their pulpits as a Christian minister, or its members into their churches by letter from it; they do not dismiss their members by letter to it, or suffer their pastors to enter its pulpit. This consummation of the extreme act possible under the principle of the communion of churches is, indeed, not a consummation devoutly to be wished, except in extreme cases. It is the last resort

possible to express the disapprobation of Christ's people for the false teacher and for the congregation who cherish and consent unto him.

The question may, however, be pressed, Is there no less onerous and roundabout fashion of reaching dereliet ministers, possible to our church order? In reply, you will please notice that I have constantly made a distinction between the minister as such, and the pastor or chosen officer of the local church. The distinction, whether or not it be theoretically valid, we must in practice admit. As to any special means indirectly employed by the churches, and effective through associations, conventions, consociations, or other standing forms of union among ordained and unordained members of local churches, we shall speak briefly at another time. The purity of the pastors of our churches, of the men who are statedly teaching those churches, is to be secured and conserved, so far as it is directly committed to the local church, or to the fellowship of churches, in the ways indicated above. The discipline which these various bodies exercise over the ministers within them is only indirect means of reaching the same ministers as pastors. If, however, any church persist in hearing as their teacher a man found unworthy by any of these ecclesiastical bodies of which this man may happen to be a member, such church may be admonished for the offence. In order, however, to make this course practically effective, we must recognize those who have been chosen by the churches to teach, and to administer the sacraments, for no matter how brief time chosen, and whether installed or not, as the pastors of those churches.

If the further question be asked, What shall be done for the ministerial purity of notably impure and hereti-

cal men who are neither pastors of churches nor acknowledged members of any ministerial body? the question itself must be declared to be on the very verge of absurdity. The churches that wittingly hear them may be admonished, so that these blind leaders shall not be leaders of the blind. But, as for the men themselves, the purity of the ministry is best preserved by letting them alone, that alone they may fall into their ditch. From this ditch the memory of a former ordination will not preserve them; and, when they are once consciously there, a helping hand may best be extended to them for the restoration, *not, in any case, of their ministerial standing*, but of their characters, and for the saving of their souls.

LECTURE VIII.

THE PRINCIPLE OF THE COMMUNION OF CHURCHES.

THE application of the principle of the communion of churches has given rise to more heated debate, and has been the occasion of more division and strife, than that of any other principle belonging to church polity. Congregationalists have been more divided, both in theory and in action, by determining how they shall best be united, than in any other way. Such division appears the more remarkable when we consider for a moment the very obvious truth, that the entire basis of this principle lies in the great and celestial fact of Christian brotherly love. The communion of churches has no real meaning to thought, and no valid claim upon consideration or conduct, except in so far as we regard this communion in the light of charity. The communion of churches is the expression of that love toward one another which belongs to all true followers of Christ. That Christian men should be separated most widely by the very effort to unite Christian churches, is, indeed, a most remarkable fact. But this fact is by no means peculiar to the working of any one church order. The effort at union has divided believers in all ages of the church.

Within our own churches, and especially in the body of our ministry, there has been a marked difference of

opinion, and at times a notable discord, as to the wisest and most effective ways of applying this distinctive principle. The principle is distinctive with Congregationalists, not in itself, but rather in its adjustment to other distinctive principles. And in this fact we may find one reason for the difficulties which encompass its application. For just as all theologians are always to be divided into two classes, the first of which is called, by itself and by its opponents, Calvinists, and the second of which is called, chiefly by its opponents, Arminians, so are all Congregationalists always to be divided into two classes, the first of which is called, by itself and by its opponents, simply Congregationalists, and the second of which is called, chiefly by its opponents, Independents. The sharp contests and discordant conduct of these two classes may be traced through more than two hundred years: all this time they have been more or less divided about the right way to be united. And the very nature of the debate, as well as the names which have been fixed upon the two parties, has shown that the adjustment of the principle of the autonomy of the local church with the principle of the communion of churches is the subject in dispute. The class which has emphasized the former principle has often been accused, justly or unjustly, of Independency: the class which has emphasized the latter principle has often been accused, justly or unjustly, of Presbyterianizing. And, after all, the difference has been largely one of emphasis. This difference in placing the emphasis involves, however, the possibility of a much wider and a continuously widening difference. The beginning of a schism is, generally, in an excess of emphasis upon some one principle. The possibility of a "new denomination" has always lain, and still lies, in this difference of opinion

as to which of these two principles needs at any given time the greater stress of attention and endeavor. Indeed, we actually find a somewhat too impulsive writer of the last century[1] venturing upon words such as these: "The idea I have conceived of these two denominations . . . is, that they are as different one from the other as the system of religion and policy by Moses was from the confusion of Babel." As to which of the two he considers like the system of Moses, and which like the confusion of Babel, our author leaves us in no doubt; for in another passage he characterizes the so-called Independents as the strange woman of whom Solomon speaks, "Her ways are movable that thou canst not know them."

We must, therefore, admit that the right adjustment, in theory and in practice, of these two seemingly conflicting principles, is a matter for rational divergence of view. We must also admit that this adjustment can never be once for all made and committed to tradition or to paper in the form of sets of rules obligatory for the guidance of the churches in all ages. The piety, patience, and good sense of Christian men, are needed to make a perpetual and a perpetually better re-adjustment. Whatever difficulty may arise in such re-adjustment is one phase of the world-wide general difficulty in adjusting the claims of egoism and altruism, the rights of self-control and the duties of self-surrender, the autonomy of local government and due regard for the more general welfare. It must be admitted, moreover, that, since only an abundance of high intelligence and broad deep charity can prove efficient in the best making of such adjustments, Congregationalists have been hindered

[1] Author of the tract, Congregationalism as contained in the Scriptures, etc. Boston, 1794.

in their work by lack of these qualities. They have not been conspicuously lacking in the possession of these qualities: they have, perhaps, not been comparatively lacking in the display of them. But they have been lacking, as all Christians have been, in the possession: they have been, perhaps, conspicuously lacking in the disposition to supply their lack. Moreover, *their* church order requires for its best work the conspicuous possession of just these qualities. It is to be hoped that more thought and charity bestowed upon the continuous development, in its application, of the principle of the communion of churches, will in time secure for us a more potent unity. It is in this hope, and speaking the truth in love, that the thoughts of the following two Lectures on the Communion of Congregational Churches are offered to your attention.

In order to make a trustworthy survey we must first of all orientate ourselves; and these two stakes will serve our purpose. We start from the point of view furnished by that divine, self-sacrificing love, which, having come from the heart of God, and having been made manifest in the person and work of our Lord, establishes itself in the hearts of his followers. As has been already declared, Christian communion must grow out of Christian charity. The external communication of thought and will is from the inner unity of spirit. The intercourse of the churches of Christ can never be more, and ought never to be less, than a faithful and wise expression of fellowship of soul. No act, then, has any place between churches which is not intended and adapted to express brotherly love. Every act between churches, necessary to express brotherly love, is a valid communion of churches. By these apparently sweeping statements we may test the six so-called ways of

communion provided by the Cambridge Platform: we shall find each one of these six ways amply sustaining the test. In this manner, also, may we test all those various unsuccessful and damaging efforts to apply this principle which have been made in the history of our churches: we shall find their ill success and damaging effect due to this, that they were not genuine and wise expressions of Christian brotherly love. The interchange of members and ministers, the supply of the needs of a poorer by a wealthier church, the sending of letters and messengers, the fraternal conferences in formal synods and councils and in the more informal fellowship-meetings, are ways of the communion of churches; but these are all means of expressing charity. Advice should never be asked or given between sister-churches, except as an expression of unfeigned brotherly confidence and love. Even admonition, and, in the last resort, that act which severs the semblance of a connection known no longer to be real, are acts of Christian charity: otherwise they have no place amongst professed Christians. To speak of the fellowship or communion of churches otherwise than as a means of manifesting the love of Christian brethren for each other and for all of Christ's people is to utter a manifest absurdity. To enter into any act of so-called communion without being moved by love is to enter upon an unchristian act: the entrance is likely to lead to an outrage of rights and to a disgrace of the Christian name. But, on the other hand, to refuse to undertake any necessary act of communion, even though it be the admonishing or disfellowshipping of a church, if it be a genuine and wise expression of brotherly love, is to refuse the obligation of that love. The spirit of indifference and the spirit of quarrelsomeness, the spirit of

self-assertion and the spirit of indulgence, are all alike out of place in the communion of churches.

Starting from the point of view where charity remains immovably fixed, we move along the line of reality. The communion of churches should grow out of charity; but it should also always correspond to the facts. We are obligated to use the ways of communion just so far as we have real communion. We really have Christian brotherly love toward all who have received Christ in faith. We are, then, obligated to manifest that love in acts of communion with all such. But the form of the manifestation must be determined by the reality which is to be expressed in the form. We are to love all true believers in the Roman-Catholic Church: we are, therefore, to have with them such acts of communion as correspond to the real communion of our hearts. We cannot commune with them in receiving and dismissing members, because the basis for such communion does not exist. For, according to a New-Testament principle, we must receive as members only those who give to the church receiving them credible evidence of true penitence and faith toward Christ. We cannot commune with them in interchange of ministers, because there is no basis in reality for such an act of communion. They must in conscience have a priest to administer the sacraments: we cannot in conscience acknowledge the priestly office in receiving the sacraments. With the so-called Evangelical denominations we can have more acts of church communion than with even our holiest brethren in the Roman-Catholic Church, because there is a real basis for more such acts. But it is only with Congregational churches that we can commune in certain ways, as, for instance, the formal admonition, the act of deposing a minister, or of

disfellowshipping a church, because only with such churches would these acts of communion have any basis in reality.

Physiology is studied in these days largely through the phenomena of disease. Thus may the nature of true communion of churches be made more obvious by a consideration of the nature of schism. Schism has been designated "*a sin against charity*," as heresy is a sin against faith. That schism is not prevented, but rather fostered, by all attempts at compelling men to uniformity of creed, or worship, or government, when they are not inwardly impelled to a real unity in these matters, should by this age of the world be made clear from history. "On supposition that the Church of Rome is a church of Christ," says the celebrated John Owen,[1] "it will appear to be the most schismatical church in the world." The view taken of this subject in the treatise of this author entitled "Of Schism" is, on the whole, as it seems to me, quite defective, and yet contains many most profound suggestions for a complete view. The very heart of the subject appears to be reached in these words of Owen:[2] "Let, then, the general demand be granted, that schism is διαίρεσις τῆς ἑνότητος, 'the breach of union,' which I shall attend with one reasonable *postulatum*, namely, that this union be a union of the appointment of Jesus Christ." If schism is a rending, the nature of the rending is to be determined by the nature of the thing rent. The thing rent in the case of any schism is the *manifested unity* of the Church of Christ. Our conception of the nature of the church and of the forms in which its manifested unity should express itself, must, therefore, determine our conception of schism. If, however, we admit the proposition of

[1] Works, xiii. p. 114. [2] Ibid., p. 123.

Owen, that "the Church of Christ living in this world" has three meanings in Scripture, viz., "the church catholic militant," or mystical body of Christ, the "church catholic visible," and "a particular church," we shall even then be obliged to depart somewhat from his view in carrying out our argument; for with the mystical body of Christ the schisms in the churches and of the churches have really nothing to do. Its unity has no breach made in it by the assaults of selfish ecclesiasticism, or sectarian zeal. On the other hand, it is within the "*church catholic visible*" that the sorest and most destructive wounds of schism are made. Divisions and rendings of the manifested unity of the one catholic church are schismatic, as well as breaches of the union of a particular church. The union of his followers for which Jesus prayed, in order that the world might be convinced of his divine mission, is a *manifested unity.* And if the Roman-Catholic Church can show that the form which it attempts to give to this manifestation of unity is according to the appointments of Jesus Christ, then to withdraw from that church is indeed an unpardonable schism. But, in whatever sense we use the word "church," we have to consider, as Owen points out, both the "*formalis ratio*" of its union (that which makes the union what it is), "and the way and means whereby it exerts itself, and is useful and active in communion." We are obligated as individual Christians and as Christian churches to seek for a manifested unity for the entire body of Christ's disciples: the means of manifestation must, however, not contradict, even if it do not directly represent, any appointments of Christ. To oppose in any manner or degree the manifestation of the unity of the one catholic church, if only the mode of manifestation can be seen to be in accord with the

commands of Him in whom the whole church is united, must be regarded as active schism: even to fail in this manifestation is of the nature of a sin of omission; and the sin committed in the omission is closely allied to the sin of schism.

We conclude, then, that the communion of churches is but the fit expression of that Christian brotherly love in which all believers are united, and that the law of the means and extent of this communion requires that the manifestation shall correspond to a reality, that the acts of communion shall always arise from a basis in facts of affection. The opposite of the communion of churches is an appearance of schism. Schism is that breach of the union of the Church in Christ which is made by opposing or neglecting any form of manifesting such union, provided that form accords with the appointment of Christ. From our point of view, therefore, that church is most schismatical which most hinders the manifestation of a complete unity in Christ. And since nothing else so hinders such a manifestation as the attempt to compel men to subscription to one creed, or to adherence to one form of worship, or to allegiance to some human authority of ecclesiasticism, the individuals and churches that most affect and attempt these things are of all most schismatical. An enforced formalism in the relations of Christian churches is not communion of churches; it is rather of the nature of schism; it is the chief provoker and producer of actual schisms.

The faithful use of the formal principle of the true church polity yields many ideas, impressions, and general maxims, for the right practice of communion of churches: it does not, however, give us set formulas or detailed instructions. For such formulas and instruc-

tions we must rely largely upon the common-law principle; that is, we must use such means of expressing our charity toward all churches of Christ as the custom of our church order has provided. We may do this, although we do not find the means formally commended in Scripture, unless, indeed, we do find any customary means contrary to some appointment of Christ. Under the principle of progress, and seeking the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, Congregational churches may institute new means of manifesting the unity of all saints in Christ. Indeed, to alertness in contriving, and diligence in using, such means, they are pledged by the word of the Master: that word commands the manifestation in all ways of a real unity in Him. Christians are bidden in Scripture not only to love one another, but also to show forth that love in edifying one another, in instructing, exhorting, rebuking, admonishing, and provoking to good works: they are to administer the full benefits of the gospel in all ways one to another. "He that hath taken a bath needeth not save to wash his feet," and "ye ought to wash one another's feet," are words of Jesus which appoint to his followers the task of a mutual moral purifying. The task is certainly not one of merely geographical limitations, but of fitness of means to ends in love. Churches are bound to wash the feet of one another as truly as are individual Christians.

Examples of the communion of churches are by no means wanting in the New Testament: the collection in the richer churches for the poor of a sister-church, the salutations passing from church to church, the constant interchange of members between churches, and the sendings of letters and messengers from one church to another are examples of such communion. The

apostles and their helpers were peripatetic girders into oneness of the building which their hands were busy in erecting. They joined in bonds of communion the churches which they founded.

The narrative of these churches closes at too early a date to exhibit any perfected system of means for the communion of churches, or even to disclose many examples of such communion in its more formal and rarer forms. We find all the believers in a given city remaining together in one body, and doubtless under one college of presbyter-bishops; and this even after they had grown far too numerous to admit of their convenient assembling in one place, at one time, for worship. In this respect we find them not walking orderly after the Cambridge Platform. The question as to which shall be followed, the example of the Apostolic Churches, or the law of the Platform, we will not now discuss. Traces of the crystallizing into concrete custom of their fluid life may be seen in the ordination of Paul and Barnabas for their missionary work by one church, and in the ordination of Timothy by another church acting conjointly with Paul, and possibly, also, with the elders of neighboring churches.

The most noteworthy example of the more formal means employed for this communion of churches occurs in the fifteenth chapter of Acts. When controversy and debate arose in Antioch, the church there sent certain ones chosen from its own number, in company with Paul and Barnabas, to Jerusalem, unto the apostles and presbyters, concerning this matter of debate. But, when the answer went forth in the name of the apostles and the college of presbyters and the brethren, it was not directed to the inquiring church alone: it was directed to the brethren in Syria and Cilicia as

well. The church at Antioch had, however, been alone in asking the questions treated in this epistolary answer. Here, certainly, was an unsolicited attempt, on the part of the officers and brethren of the church at Jerusalem, to hold communion by way of advice with several quite remote churches. Indeed, although the address of the letter limited it to Syria and Cilicia, the intention seems to have been to recommend its measures, with the conceded authority of the apostles and the officers of the mother-church, to all Gentile Christians.[1] We do not discover, however, that any of the churches received obstreperously this unsolicited advice. On the contrary, we are told that the congregation at Antioch, when it read this letter from Jerusalem, rejoiced over the edifying exhortation.[2] And when Paul and Silas, traversing Iconium, delivered by word of mouth to the churches of these regions the ordinances of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, we are also told, these churches, therefore, were strengthened in the faith, and increased in numbers.

The manifestation of that unity in love for which the means appointed by our church order should provide includes the administering of reproof, unsolicited advice and admonition, the attempt at a moral and doctrinal purifying of the Church. These means of communion undoubtedly require much more of fraternal love for their successful employment than those which are of much pleasanter features. They undoubtedly should be used with comparative rareness.

[1] See Meyer on this passage. Says De Wette, "So scheint es allerdings Vorstellung der AG. zu sein, dass der *Brief* nur diedurch die Adresse der vorlieg. St. beschränkte, seine *Festsetzung* dagegen allgemeinere Bestimmung hatten."

[2] ἐπὶ τῇ παρακλήσει; Grimm and Meyer translate as above (erweckliche zusprache); but De Wette and most of the older commentators translate, consolation.

Having stated certain fundamental truths which are common to all applications of the principle of the communion of churches, we will now consider some of its particular applications.

This principle should be applied in the instituting of Congregational churches. A Congregational church begins to exist as one of a sisterhood of churches already existing: by the very principles in accordance with which it is instituted, it is obligated, from its inception, to hold the utmost of communion fit to be held with all churches of Jesus Christ. But the simple fact that it is a *Congregational* church furnishes a basis in reality for a special manifestation of its unity with all so-called Congregational churches. The act of communion fitted to its institution is such that it should, from the beginning, be acknowledged by others as one of a sisterhood, as a particular visible church set in the world in the midst of other similar bodies of disciples. It should at once crave the hand of fellowship: the hand of fellowship should from the beginning be extended to it. The form of holding communion at the organizing of a church, which is now in general use, is, that a body of believers, wishing to form themselves into a distinct church, shall call a council of neighboring churches to advise them with reference to their intended act, and, if the advice be favorable, to extend to them, as then and there formed on the basis of that advice, the right hand of fellowship. It is, however, perfectly competent for any body of believers in Christ to form themselves into a church, and then to seek the recognition of communion by asking for the right hand of fellowship in ordaining their officers, or in some subsequent act of common interest to all neighboring sister-churches. Simply in the spontaneous exercise of this

their inalienable right of self-organization, and in the faithful discharge of their undying obligation as Christians to covenant with one another, many of our earliest and purest churches were founded. This self-constituting power of the local church is a principle of church polity, and must never be disparaged or denied. Its denial is a fundamental reversal of the whole doctrine of Congregationalism. But principle also compels every newly constituted church to seek fraternal recognition from other churches. There is no objection in theory to the blending in one act of these two principles, and to the self-constituting of the local church in use of such advice as secures to it from its beginning the recognition desired. On the contrary, this way of instituting a Congregational church should now be generally adopted.

Indeed, there is now a special reason why the advice of neighboring churches should be taken at the very inception of every such institution, — a reason which did not prevail in the earlier circumstances of our churches. In almost all circumstances of the present day the very question whether a church shall be formed at all needs advice from unprejudiced sources. That a number of believers in Christ, although the number be very small, when living remote from all actually existing and operative churches, should enter into covenant with one another, our principles do not leave us in doubt; but, where other churches of Christ are within tolerably convenient distances of a number of believers who are intent upon instituting a new church, the question whether they may reasonably decline to join themselves with the churches already existing is the first important question. The settlement of it stands before the very threshold of the new establishment. Moreover, such a question is in these days gen-

erally made the more embarrassing for the would-be founders of *Congregational* churches, from the fact that these surrounding churches are themselves in principles, if not in name, so largely Congregational. No compulsion from the demands of a state church, no barrier from an untenable creed, no patent violation of the rights and duties enjoined upon all believers by the New Testament, usually prevents men in conscience from uniting themselves with one of several churches already constituted. The question, then, whether the formation of the proposed church shall be consummated at all, is a question which needs the advice of neighboring churches. It is to the honor of Congregationalists that they have, as a rule, so carefully considered this question: however, it may be to their discredit that they have not been forward enough in planting and nurturing upon virgin soil a larger crop of New-Testament churches.

The principle of the communion of churches may, in certain cases, cause the suspension of the right which all believers have to constitute themselves into a particular visible church. No power, indeed, can dictate to Christian men and women that they shall not, after prayer and consecration, and illumining from on high, dispose themselves, as seems to them fit, in groups covenanted to walk together after the order of the gospel. But the refusal to receive advice concerning the formation of a church may, although only rarely and in extreme cases, justify the refusal of the neighboring churches to hold full communion with the church which has refused advice. As early as 1636, the organization of the First Church of Dorchester was delayed from March [1] until the following August, because Rev. Rich-

[1] Increase Mather, in his Life of his father Richard, gives the date as April 1 (April 10).

ard Mather and his people were advised "by the general vote of the churches" to postpone their contemplated act of confederation.[1] The organization was, however, finally effected to the satisfaction of all parties. The first attempt at organizing the North Parish Church at Andover failed, and, as we are told, "the messengers of the churches not being satisfied, the assembly broke up before they had accomplished what they had intended." The people of the parish wisely waited until the fleeing messengers returned upon their course, and, having "changed their views," they "conformed to the prevailing custom:" the church was then duly organized.[2] The correspondence between Mr. Mather and Mr. Shepard, who was the chief opposer of the too early organization of the church in Dorchester, shows that the advice of the council was well given and well received. "It was a sad thing to us to defer the uniting of your people together. . . . Oh, let not a little waiting be sad or grievous to you," writes Mr. Shepard. "As for what you spake that day, I bless the Lord for it. . . . You have, by your free and faithful dealing that day, endeared yourself in my esteem more than ever. . . . The Lord render you a rich and plentiful reward for your love and faithfulness!" writes, in response, Mr. Mather. Surely the sight of so much genuine Christian fidelity and charity is worth a little patient waiting, even in a matter so pressing as the founding of a Christian church.

The application of the principle of communion of churches to the instituting of a new Congregational church is designed to secure its institution upon a

[1] See Historical Sketch, etc., p. 17, and Shepard's Autobiography, by Dr. Nehemiah Adams.

[2] Hubbard, p. 416.

sound and durable foundation. The judgment of sister-churches is evoked not only as to the time and occasion, but also as to the *manner*, in which believers shall organize themselves into church relations. As we have already seen, it is the principle of a regenerate membership which chiefly determines the manner of this organization. The council called to organize a Congregational church must, therefore, first of all, be satisfied that the persons who desire to form themselves into the church are such, and only such, as can give credible evidence of godly repentance, and saving faith toward Christ: they must also be satisfied that these persons, if thus organized, are likely to continue their organization upon this the only true and permanent foundation. The council, that is to say, is bound by the law of its existence to require proof that the would-be founders of the new church are regenerate souls, and that they intend to found a church which shall admit to its membership only such souls as shall give to it proof of being regenerate. The article which evinces this proof and intention is the *Covenant* of the church. To the nature of the covenant which it is proposed by the first members to make with one another, and to require of all subsequent members, must the attention of the neighboring churches be primarily and most earnestly directed. A body of believers who present a satisfactory covenant as the basis of their church union may be given, on that basis alone, the right hand of the fellowship of churches; but a body of alleged believers who present no such basis cannot be recognized as one of a sisterhood of Congregational churches.

With this truth in view, we must pronounce the conception and definition of a Christian church which is presented by Robert Hall, in his treatise "On Terms of

Communion,"[1] much more loose and unsatisfactory than are the accepted Congregational conception and definition. "A number of Christians convened for the worship of God," says this author, "constitutes a Christian assembly, or a church." It has, indeed, been held by some, that the covenant of a church may be, at least temporarily, only an implied one. Still does it remain true, that, to refer again to the language of Davenport, the covenant is the "formal cause" of a particular church: it is the covenant, voluntary entering into which "essentiates the church relation." "A Congregational church," says the Platform, "is . . . united into one body by a holy covenant."[2] And again:[3] "Saints by calling must have a visible political union among themselves, or else they are not yet a particular church;" and the form of this political union, by which they are constituted into a particular church, "is the visible covenant, agreement, or consent, whereby they give up themselves unto the Lord, to the observing of the ordinances of Christ together; which is usually called the Church covenant." Now, the basis for the recognition of any particular church by its sister-churches cannot properly be another basis than the one upon which it is really constituted as a church of Christ. The basis for its existence as a church is the basis of its communion with others.

It is true theory, then, and sound practice as well, that the particular visible church need not, at its institution, make any further formulated statement of its faith than that which is involved and necessarily expressed in its covenant. It must have a confession of faith; but it need not have a declaration of dogmatic belief. In other words, it is the covenant, and not the creed, of a

[1] See Works, vol. i. p. 75. [2] Chap. ii. sect. 6. [3] Chap. iv. sects. 1, 3.

new Congregational church, which is the primary object of inspection by the council assembled to help in instituting it: it is the nature of the covenant presented, and the ability of those desiring recognition to enter into any true church covenant, which is to determine the granting or withholding such recognition in the right hand of fellowship.

How tender, effective, and complete, may be the communion of churches without the adoption of any common creed, the history of the New Testament and of early Congregationalism may make us aware. The refusals to extend to would-be new churches the right hand of fellowship, which occur, although only rarely, in the first century and a half of New-England Congregationalism, are not attributable to desire to see every new church instituted upon a series of sufficiently orthodox articles of belief. The cause of delay in the two cases already cited concerned rather the principle of a regenerate membership. Mr. Shepard "took exception at the Christian experiences" of several of the candidates for membership in the expected First Church of Dorchester. The candidates were judged by the council "not meet at present to be the foundation of a church," because they built their hope upon "dreams and ravishes of the spirit by fits," or upon mere "external reformation," or "upon their duties and performances." And the candidates for membership at the first attempt to organize the North Parish Church at Andover were delayed in consummating their union, because they refused to make anew the confession of their faith and repentance.

Upon this subject we must not, however, forget the following truths. There was, among the earlier New-England Congregationalists, such wide-spread and near-

ly universal consent to the comprehensive and detailed statements of doctrine made in the Westminster and Savoy Confessions, that the orthodoxy of the would-be membership of the churches to be constituted was, as a general rule, quite beyond suspicion. The Confession of Faith, so far as it formed a partial manifestation of the real basis for constituting any Congregational church, and for its recognition by sister-churches, was in substance a very simple expression of heart-life; while in form it was made an integral part of the covenant. What we now call the Covenant was then frequently called "Confession of Faith *and* Covenant:" what we call the Confession of Faith (that is, articles of dogmatic belief) was not put forth by the particular church.

The ancient custom, however, when viewed in the light of the changes it has since undergone, leaves us in no doubt that our fathers never planned to receive into the communion of their churches any bodies of professed disciples with whose articles of belief they were not in substantial accord. Their great liberality in the terms of admission to the particular church we have already discerned. It is the presence of heresy, with its accompanying suspicion and slander, which makes it incumbent upon the local church to set forth articles of belief, and even to present them for inspection to those representatives of other churches from whom, at its institution, it requests the right hand of fellowship. In the words of John Cotton,[1] "When a church is suspected and slandered, with corrupt and unsound doctrine, they have a call from God to set forth a public confession of their faith." The articles of belief formulated by the particular church have the same general object as those formulated by learned indi-

[1] Modest and Clear Answer, etc., Hanbury, ii. p. 162.

viduals, or by large bodies of learned Christians assembled in councils and synods. They are promulgated with a view to exhibit the unity of the Christian churches in the Christian faith. The neighboring churches, when called to recognize a new institution as a sister Congregational church, have a right to know that their acts of communion are to correspond to a reality.

In circumstances where a creed, adopted by the local church as a manifesto of its faith, seems requisite to make clear the reality of the basis upon which the communion of the churches is sought and given, such a creed may be required. But this creed is not, as we have already concluded, to be made an indispensable requirement, and exacted of each member received into the particular church; nor is it to be regarded as constituting the basis of its fellowship with other churches. It is a declaration or manifesto, deemed under the circumstances desirable, of a part of the real basis of communion. The act of the council organizing a new church does not bind the church never to change the creed which it sets forth before the sister-churches at its organization. "For," to finish the extract from John Cotton, begun above, "to prescribe the same as the confession of the faith of that church to their posterity or to prescribe the confession of one church to be a form and pattern unto others, sad experience hath showed what a snare it hath been to both."

We derive, then, this conclusion as representing the true doctrine of Congregationalism. The particular church is to make a statement of its articles of belief, whenever it becomes necessary to do so in order to manifest the reality of those acts of communion which it seeks, and expects to give to, and to receive from, other Congregational churches. It does not, however,

pledge itself, by making a statement of dogma at its organization, to continue the one form of statement indefinitely without change. Both church and council recognize another principle of Congregationalism: this is the principle of progress through inquiry. The expectation of progress recognizes the truth, that, in articles of belief, Christian churches and individual members of churches can require, in order to Christian communion, only a very limited substantial accord; and, furthermore, that fixing the form of words to the satisfaction of one particular church or special age does not bind the form as a fixture upon all particular churches or ages, or upon any one church for any special period of time. The manifest advantage upon the surrounding community of securing in every church of Christ some clear and potent statement of its articles of belief, and the great disadvantage of making too frequent changes in these statements, do not concern our discussion at the present point. The principle of the communion of churches may, indeed, tolerate, and even require, that every new church shall exhibit at its institution a satisfactory creed as well as covenant. The common-law principle gives us at present such a safe and wise custom. The various stages of the growth of the custom can be traced in the history of our churches. A single example may serve to mark each of these stages.

The very earliest stage is that exhibited in the wholly informal communion of the church at Plymouth with the church at Salem, through the busy Dr. Fuller. Yet so intimate and effective is this informal communion, that we are told of Gov. Winthrop's company, Dr. Fuller and two other brethren from Plymouth being at hand, "They would do nothing without our advice, requiring our voices as their own, when it was conclud-

ed that the Lord was to be sought in righteousness."[1] An example of the communion of churches in instituting a new church, chosen from a time fifty years later, will bring us to the next stage.

We read, that at the organization of the First Church at Marblehead, Aug. 13, 1684, "after Mr. Cheevers had prayed and preached, he presented and read a confession of faith and covenant which they had all considered of and agreed upon among themselves, and which then they did express their consent unto. And *so* they were owned and approved by the elders and messengers of the churches present as a particular and distinct church of Christ amongst themselves."[2] At the re-organization of the First Church of Salem in 1736, the members added to their simpler ancient covenant, among other words, the following:[3] "More particularly as to our faith, we are persuaded of the Christian religion contained in the Scriptures of the books of the old and new testament, as explained in the Catechism compiled by the Rev'd assembly of divines at Westminster, as to the substance of it. And as to the order of the gospel among us, we profess and take the Platform of Church Discipline in New England, composed by the Synod at Cambridge, 1648, to be our rule and method of church discipline." We note here this fact, that, as to faith, the confession is declared taken "as to the substance of it;" and one of the subscribers has curiously enough added to his name in subscription these words: "As to Discipline, I take the Platform as to the substance for my rule." It early became a not unfrequent practice for the churches to vote declarations of

[1] Massachusetts Historical Collection, vol. iii. p. 74, f.
[2] Records of the First Church of Salem.
[3] New-England Congregationalism, etc., p. 112, f.

acceptance of some one or more of the historic symbols. This practice marks the next stage in the growth of custom. And the spread of alleged heresy, especially during the Unitarian controversy, finally fixed our present custom of expecting each particular church to exhibit at its institution, and maintain through all its course, some formulated confession of the Christian belief.

There arises, therefore, in this connection, the very practical and important inquiry, What amount and kind of agreement must be expected between the views of the council organizing a church and the creed of the men and women expecting thus to be organized? To this inquiry there can be returned only the same indefinite reply which has already been made to a similar inquiry. The agreement must be as to fundamental truths and as to substance of doctrine. Our forefathers, indeed, defined heresy to be "the stubborn maintenance of a destructive error which subverts the foundations of the Christian religion," or "the venting of corrupt and pernicious opinions that destroy the foundation;" but they did not answer for all time the question, What is the exact form of statement necessary to those fundamental truths? or even the question, What are the truths alone fundamental? For the answer to these questions we must apply ourselves to the Scriptures in the use of an enlightened Christian consciousness, remembering, however, the subtle remark of Dr. Gale, "It is very common to call those points we are fond of fundamental, and think it very justifiable, nay commendable, to renounce communion with such as err in those fundamentals."

The following scriptural tests may profitably be used on all occasions of such inquiry: (1) Degree of clear-

ness; (2) Extent of compass; (3) Vitality of relation. "No doctrine," says Foster, "is a fundamental . . . but what is so plainly and distinctly revealed as that an ordinary Christian, sincere in his inquiries, cannot miss of the knowledge of it." "All things in Scripture," says the Westminster Confession, "are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all." "He that will estrange his affection," says Thomas Hooker, "because of the difference of apprehension in things difficult, he must be a stranger to himself one time or other."

It might seem that this free, progressive manner of committing the formulated statement of articles of faith to the exigencies of the occasion, and at all times so largely to the judgment and conscience of the local churches, would cause wide-spread and scandalous heresies, and finally irreparable schisms. The testimony of history is, however, directly the reverse of all this. "If we unroll the scroll of history," says Professor E. P. Barrows,[1] "we find that it is precisely that church which has the strongest organization that is most corrupt; and, further, that it is this very strength of hierarchical power that makes it irreclaimable in its corruptions." As to the security from heresy which churches find in enforced subscription to creeds, the German author who wrote "Notes and Additions to Hartley's Work upon Man," truly says, "Experience clearly shows, that, though the Thirty-nine Articles were established for the purpose of preventing difference of opinion, this end has not been in the least degree promoted by them." The open enemies and timid friends of our church order are of the opinion that it is, as a bond of unity in doctrine, no better than a rope of sand; that it is, in dealing with heresy, no more puissant than

[1] Contributions to Ecclesiastical History of Connecticut, p. 106.

the shaking fist of an infant. They cannot see how it is possible to maintain the orthodoxy of the local churches, and at the same time concede to them the right, and lay upon them the responsibility, of erecting and maintaining their own standards of orthodoxy. It is, however, always a safe refutation of an opinion to allege against it a fact; and surely any thing may be conceived as possible which has been for two centuries and a half an accomplished fact. No other church order has been freer from heresy, or dealt with it, when arising, more promptly and efficiently, than Congregationalism. The statistics of comparative orthodoxy would be indeed difficult to collect: the display of them would be an invidious task.

Nearly fifty years since, Dr. Leavitt, in speaking[1] of this same complaint against Congregationalism, instanced the following alleged facts: In 1772 some two hundred and fifty clergymen of the Church of England, holding Unitarian sentiments, petitioned the British Parliament to be released from subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles. The petition was rejected, and the petitioners not censured: they remained, however, in the church. Did they become orthodox, or dissemble? Since the Restoration of Charles Second (until 1831), the same author states that one hundred and eighty-six congregations in England have become Unitarian, of which fewer than ten were Independent, and the great majority Presbyterian.[2] Dr. Chalmers declared that the Scotch Congregationalists were "the purest body of Christians in the United Kingdom." But have not Congregationalists in this country suffered the Uni-

[1] See article in the Christian Spectator, September, 1831.

[2] It should be said in fairness, that these churches were not under a fully organized Presbyterian government.

tarian schism? and is not this fact always alleged as sufficient proof of the unsoundness and inefficiency of their church order? They have indeed suffered that combined heresy and schism; and yet the conclusion legitimately to be derived from the facts are almost precisely the opposite of those often drawn. Unitarianism came into the Congregational churches of New England, not because they had no higher walls of an enforced creed and a strictly ecclesiastical communion with one another: Unitarianism entered those churches through the breach in one of their own avowed and most important principles; viz., that of a regenerate membership. Formalism, indifferentism, neglect of moral reforms, and, as both cause and result of these, an abundance of unrenewed men and women in the churches, were the causes of their seeming disasters in that sad epoch.

The source, then, of the doctrinal errors which afflicted the churches of Massachusetts in the eighteenth century, and which, beginning to show itself in Arminianism imported from England, ended with Unitarianism developed from within, was moral and *religious indifferentism* in the churches themselves. In the order of time as well, the decay of real piety, the disregard of heart relations to God and to Christ as a requisite of church-membership, preceded the doctrinal defection. And the insisting upon a formal assent to a creed, rather than the search after a change in the inner life, fostered, instead of preventing, the doctrinal defection. Indeed, the trust in a creed may become a part of that formalism which invites new schisms. So, then, it came about, that, as Dr. James S. Clarke has declared,[1] "with a creed as sound as John Cotton's or John Calvin's, the ministers were lapsing into religious formalism, and the

[1] Historical Sketch, p. 140.

churches into spiritual apathy." The creed was sound; but the preaching, and the hearts of the members of the churches, had not the power of the spirit of Christ. Rev. Thomas Foxcroft is forced to lament that the printed sermons of his time give so little weight to "the grand principles of the everlasting gospel;" and the writer referred to above asserts that the several hundred manuscripts of sermons of that time which he has had occasion to examine are "quite as defective in fulness and force of evangelical doctrine as those which passed the press."

Nor is this relation between doctrinal defection and religious indifferentism confined to one place or church order. The words of Jonathan Edwards may be illustrated from all periods and forms of church polity: "The doctrines on which a church is seen to act will prevail over those which are merely uttered."[1] A half-century of moral disturbances and ineffective discipline, to be marked by much bewailing of "the great prevalence of vice and profaneness," and of "a lamentable indifference in spiritual concerns among the people," passed in Connecticut before any clear signs of defection in doctrine occurred. And, when doctrinal defection did occur in Connecticut, it was prevented from taking the form of Massachusetts Unitarianism by a difference of the two States in circumstances.

The general rule and policy of our church order, departed from in the instances wherein we have most suffered, provides that doctrinal purity shall be secured chiefly through the quickening of religious life. That each member of the particular church, and each individual church of the sisterhood of churches, shall be really alive in Jesus Christ, is the safeguard of our

[1] Great Awakening, p. 6.

orthodoxy. As one means, however, of securing and promoting this vitality, with all the health and safety which it brings, we are to use the principle of the communion of churches. This principle leads us to consider every church as both dependent and independent. Rev. John Wise says[1] of the primitive churches, "They wanted (needed) not to borrow, or receive from others, for the support of their being, and so were independent:" they "wanted the advantage of all good means, . . . so they were dependent, and became mutually officious, and accountable each to other."

Even the titles given to themselves by the early Congregational churches are eminently expressive of these principles which limit their communion. Indeed, their history of suffering and wrong borne in the attempt to attain unto the liberty with which Christ makes his people free, and as well to allow to others like liberty; their broad and earnest sympathies with all true Christians, and willingness to commune in a church way with all who loved and obeyed their Lord; their modesty of claims contrasted with the pretensions of national churches, — are all embodied in these titles. A body of believers, bound together by a covenant in which they confessed their common faith in Christ, and their common purpose to walk together, following him, these men called simply "a church," or "the church," or "the church of Christ," in such a place. To speak of any Congregational church as "a church," or "the church," in the town where it is planted, is almost to give an epitome in a title of their noble doctrine. That any writer can speak of this use of the title as involving an unwarrantable "High-Church assumption," and then proceed to attribute to it our slow progress as a "denomination,"

[1] Vindication, p. 16.

is more than your lecturer can reconcile with intelligent and loyal Congregationalism.[1]

We have now discussed the nature of the principle of communion of churches, and have applied it to the act of instituting a new Congregational church. In that act is the germ of all subsequent acts of communion. He who gives the right hand of fellowship to the new church virtually uses, in the name of the sister-churches, these words, actually spoken by Mr. Prince when he gave the right hand to Samuel Cooper, Boston, May 21, 1746:[2] "We shall do our Endeavour in all lawful Ways to preserve her in Truth, in Purity, in Order, in all the Liberties wherewith Christ has made her free, and seek her Comfort and Prosperity; as *we* and *our Churches* desire and expect the same Exercise of Love from *her*." And the new church, clasping this outstretched hand, responds in the words inserted into the covenant of the Old South of Boston, at its formation in 1669: "We do hereby covenant and promise, through the help of the same grace, to hold, promote, and maintain fellowship and communion with all the churches of saints, in all those holy ways of order appointed between them by our Lord Jesus, to the utmost may be, especially with those among whom the Lord hath sent us; that the Lord one, and his name one, in all these churches, throughout all generations, to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus."

[1] Yet see an article in Congregational Quarterly, October, 1876, p. 542.

[2] Volume in the Library of the Maine Historical Society.

LECTURE IX.

THE PRINCIPLE OF THE COMMUNION OF CHURCHES.

We have already seen that the principle of the communion of churches is derived from the great law of Christian brotherly love, and that all acts of communion between particular churches are manifestations of the fact of this love. We have seen, moreover, that the law of Christian veracity gives limits to these manifestations of brotherly love in the communion of churches. According to this law, every act of communion must represent a reality: the appearance of communion, formal or informal, must stand for corresponding facts of a vital union in Christ. The particular visible church is, therefore, bound to have communion, within certain limits, with all churches of our common Lord. But such acts of communion as imply a common way of instituting and governing local congregations of believers can, of course, have no place except between churches who in reality hold to the same way. To oppose the manifestation of the unity of all believers in love is schismatical, and a breach of that manifested unity which lay so dear upon the sacred heart of Jesus. But, in the special forms used for the manifestation of love, the law of veracity must secure a real correspondence between the symbol and the fact.

In the instituting of every Congregational church it

is fit, then, that the particular church instituted shall give and receive some recognition of the principle of the communion of churches. With right feeling and good judgment in its membership, it will crave the hand of fellowship from neighboring and sister churches. It will crave, indeed, such fellowship as is possible with all churches of Christ everywhere. But since a special, more varied, and more helpful form of manifesting the spirit of fellowship is possible only with surrounding Congregational churches, it will desire a more formal and intimate communion with such churches. And these churches, if they have right feeling and good judgment, will crave the fellowship of the recently organized and neighboring church.

The question may arise, especially in the minds of those most jealous for the honor of our denominational name, whether a church which has not as yet recognized this principle by some formal act of communion with surrounding Congregational churches can properly be called a *Congregational* church. In answering this question historically we should be obliged to recall the two drifts, or tendencies, in our polity. The distinction which exists between Congregationalism and Independency has always been more or less insisted upon. And yet our fathers did not, as a rule, call their own churches Congregational, but "a church," or "the church," or "the church of Christ," in such a place. They, on the whole, emphasized rather the autonomy of the local church. They did not exact formalities of communion as a prerequisite to acknowledgment of any church by its sister-churches. The answer to the above question which our previous analysis demands, may, then, be stated thus: A church may be a Congregational church, and yet fail, for the time, to give due

recognition to some one or more of the principles of Congregationalism. But it is in this case a defective Congregational church. The due recognition of the principle of the communion of churches is necessary in order to make a complete and orderly Congregational church. But, as to the form of recognition which is to be counted *due* recognition, our custom has varied: as in the matter of ordaining a pastor, for instance, so, also, in the matter of instituting a church. Of course if Congregationalism is to be regarded only as one among the many denominations, with its legally organized standing bodies, and its fixed system of rules and legal requirements, then formal connection with those standing bodies, formal use of those rules, and formal compliance with those legal requirements, are necessary in order to give any particular church a right to claim the title Congregational. But, if the marks of a true Congregational church are to be looked for in its conformity to certain principles as authorized by the doctrine and church life of the New Testament, then our use of the title will be somewhat different from the above. We shall, then, consider of any church, whether or not it is marked by sufficient conformity to the principles of our church order, and so classify it as Congregational or otherwise. At any rate, the bare fact that such extreme difficulty exists in the attempt to define Congregationalism by the marks which differentiate it as one denomination from other denominations is a most suggestive fact.

We consider now some of the various forms for the communion of churches which may be expected to follow upon the institution, according to the requirements of this principle, of the particular visible church. All acts of communion amongst sister Congregational

churches may be divided into two classes, — the formal and the informal. All the more formal acts of communion may be subdivided into the direct and the indirect. We consider first the informal acts of communion.

It is plain that the New-Testament churches lived in varied, constant, warm, and effectual intercourse with one another; and yet very little of this intercourse can be formulated into rules for our detailed following. Of conventions, councils, synods, consociations, associations, clubs, boards, and the various organized forms for manifesting Christian unity which are employed by our churches in the present day, they knew little or nothing. We cannot by any means argue from this fact that we should make no use of such forms. The doctrine of strict conformity solely to the customs of the New-Testament churches should by this time appear obsolete.[1] We do hold, however, — and in thus holding we simply remain faithful to the great formal principle of the true church polity, — that the principles and ideas embodied in New-Testament institutions and customs are designed to instruct and obligate all churches in all ages. We may, therefore, argue from the example of the New-Testament churches, that Christian churches in this day will do well to give a large relative importance to the more informal acts of communion. I have no hesitation in saying that these informal acts are much more important than the more formal. To have love toward our brethren in other churches, and to evince the reality and largeness of this love, is work above all organizing and controlling of

[1] This doctrine was, however, at one time, prevalent among the Puritans, especially of England. It was to controvert this doctrine that the great work of Richard Hooker was written.

synods and associations. The Home Missionary Society and the Congregational Union are of more importance to the communion of churches than is the National Council; unless, indeed, this, too, shall prove a potent means of propagating Christian churches and of really uniting them in love.

Of necessity, it is not feasible to give a full discussion of such informal acts of communion, or even a complete enumeration of them. Their form and variety must be left to the inventiveness of the Christian minds and hearts which compose the churches. In these things love has a genius for invention. It is fertile in expedients. It perpetually and momently devises new means for expression. It seizes upon all the instrumentalities contrived by selfish men for other ends, and converts them into instruments of love. It discovers in the steamship, the railroad, the telegraph, and telephone, new opportunities given by the Holy Spirit for diffusing the influences which flow from the mind and heart of Christ. It communes by rail, by wire, by express-package, or by letter. It surveys the result of the modern spirit of mechanics, and declares, as Dr. Anderson did of the railways of India, "The whole is built as really for the church as for the world, *and wholly at the expense of the latter*."

The union of Congregational churches in efforts for self-propagation and for the diffusion of the gospel in the whole world by the work of missions furnishes the most valuable forms of communion amongst sister-churches. The self-propagation of Congregationalism, and the relation of its principles to the work of missions, will, therefore, receive attention in separate lectures. The active, informal, and spontaneous expression of love in all practicable ways of communion should constantly

appear between the wealthier and stronger churches and those which are poorer and weaker. Because this expression has not been sufficiently given from East to West,[1] and from West back again to East, from every metropolitan church centrifugally to all the surrounding churches, and from them centripetally toward every metropolitan church, we have suffered far more than because we have not had enough of strong organization and ready-to-hand ecclesiastical machinery. We must remember that for one church really not to care for another involves an immoral lack of Christian love, and that for any church to manifest no care for other churches is an immoral failure to commune with others in love. The Congregational churches of the East, with their firmer stability and longer experience, are especially obligated to those of the West, not simply for gifts of money, but chiefly for vital interest, sympathy, appreciation, cheer. Each particular visible church is obligated to every other, not for the feelings alone, but also for their manifestation in all judicious ways and upon all fit occasions. The churches in the cities are especially bound by this principle of communion to demonstrate their interest and affection toward the churches of the surrounding country. The fellowship-meeting is in many places a most valuable means of communion amongst churches. Interchange of pastors is one of the means enumerated by the Cambridge Platform: no minister or congregation has the right, out of selfish, and, for the most part, narrow notions of the superiority of their own things to the things of others, to refuse a due amount of such interchange. The interchange of members in prayer-meetings and in the initiation and

[1] In illustration of this fact consult the words of Dr. Post in American Congregational Union Addresses for 1854, p. 94, f.

management of beneficent enterprises is a means of the communion of churches. Delegates formally appointed, and informal visitors, should pass between the social meetings of neighboring churches with words of encouragement, cheer, advice, and even rebuke. Letters and gifts coming from one church to another are golden ties to bind them together. No member from one Congregational church should be able to reside for more than a few days in the vicinity of another Congregational church, without a verbal or written introduction commending him to fraternal care, interest, and affection. The *epistola formata*, or regular testimonial, should be in the pocket of every Christian traveller.[1] There can be little doubt that the relative increase and sufficiency of these more informal acts of communion will characterize the advance of the kingdom of God upon earth. And long after our different rabbis shall have ceased to join in heated debate over the right form of constituting councils, synods, consociations, and all the other forms of set ecclesiastical conclave, the saints on earth and the saints on high will follow the movings of Christ's spirit within them to make known to one another and to the universe the strength and tenderness of their mutual love.

Of the more formal and direct means by which different particular churches may commune with one another, the number known as obligatory to Congregationalism may be reduced to one. This form is the recognition extended by each church to others when they give and receive advice. The thought upon which rests the use of such means is this, that all individual Christians, and all particular churches, may have the enlightenment of the spirit of Christ, and that, therefore, by a really

[1] See Neander's Memorials of Christian Life, p. 78.

mutual conference, Christians may better succeed in knowing what is the mind of Christ. It is, therefore, the material principle of the true church polity which gives rationality and force to all so-called ecclesiastical councils. If the coming-together of different particular churches in their representative members is for a purpose defined beforehand, and limited by the call as to time and questions proposed, it may be called a synod, or, more commonly, a council. But certain forms of assembly which are recognized as standing councils have established themselves in the working of our church order; among these we may enumerate the so-called consociations, conferences, conventions of various geographical limits, and the National Council.

The rules which are recognized as binding, since they express the results of our common-law principle with reference to the distinctively Congregational synod or council, are given at length in the different manuals. It is aside from our purpose, and unnecessary, to go over their ground. It is, however, demanded by our purpose that we should recall to mind certain truths in regard to the Congregational council, which would seem too obvious and simple to require notice, were it not in fact certain that they are constantly being lost out of mind. These truths concern the initiation, progress, and result of this form of the communion of churches. They are adapted to make sure that the call of the council, the deliberations and decision of the council, the reception and use of its decree (or result), shall all be suffused and controlled by the indwelling power of truth and love.

Almost from the beginning there have been two tendencies, and for the last century and a half two conflicting views openly expressed, upon this subject of the rights and duties of the churches in communion by

councils. Of the many controversial pamphlets which grew out of the quarrel in the New North Church of Boston in 1719, only two remain; but these two — now, as we are told, "lovingly stitched together into one," and lying thus amicably in the collections of the Congregational Library Association — were written to advance, one, the one, and the other, the other, of these two conflicting views. The pamphlet of Rev. Increase Mather maintains, that "if any of our churches presume to transact their weighty affairs" without the use of councils, "or if they refuse the advice of those who urge them to make use of this remedy . . . they exclude themselves from communion." But the pamphlet of Peter Thatcher and John Webb maintains, "It is an essential right, belonging to particular churches, to enjoy a free liberty within themselves . . . to judge upon their own affairs as becometh creatures endued with reason and conscience;" and "they ought to have the privilege reserved unto them of regularly determining when and in what cases to call in the help of their brethren."[1]

The nature of the decree of the council — I desire to use the word "decree" simply as signifying the voted judgment of the body, and as far as possible without embodying in it a theory — has traditionally been the chief subject of debate. On the one side it has been too often most baldly asserted that every such decree is only advisory; on the other side it has seemed to be even more baldly asserted that the decree of a council has inherent authority, and, indeed, irrespective of rational considerations, is of a mandatory nature. The debate has not unfrequently degenerated into a strife to affix one word or the other to a thing the real nature

[1] See Historical Sketch of Congregational Churches in Massachusetts, p. 133, f.

of which has been little regarded, and less understood. In certain meanings of the words, all good advice is authoritative, mandatory: in certain other meanings of the same words, all authority except that of God alone, is only advisory. The truth is, that we mortals are much in doubt as to what is truth; but Christian men should always be candidly seeking the truth. The truth when found is always mandatory; but human opinion is advisory of the truth. To claim that any individual Christian, or any particular church of Christ, being, after diligent and prayerful inquiry, still in doubt as to the truth, may further inquire of other Christian churches their deliberate judgment upon the truth, and may then treat that judgment with levity or contempt, would be to claim, under the name of Congregational freedom, an indecent libertinism, a kind of right to prostitute the truth in the service of selfishness or passion. But to claim, on the other hand, that the decree of a council viewed *ab extra*, and irrespective of the purity of motive which instituted and controlled it, and of the value in rendering judgment of the minds which composed the council, must, as some sacred papal bull or imperial ukase, of necessity govern those to whom it is issued, or else the rejecters be regarded as schismatic, and impugners of the dignity and force of Congregationalism, is to claim a palpable and unbearable absurdity. Because particular churches know that they are themselves liable to err, they ask the help of other churches in discovering the mind of Christ. In the sincere asking they recognize the truth that one Christian judgment may correct other Christian judgment, and that in a multitude of counsellors there is safety. They should ask *such* help as will insure their confidence in the help when rendered. But even large

and dignified conclaves are not infallible. In respect to the most imposing synods and councils, the manly words of Lambert can never be safely out of mind: "Greater is the decree of God than all the multitude of men; and better is it to adhere to one who has the Word of the Lord than to many that follow their own judgment." There is much more than at first appears in Richard Mather's celebrated dictum, that the decision of a council has as much force as there is force in the reason for that decision. Here *is force;* the force is *limited by* the *reasonableness* of itself; the force is diviner and more authoritative, because it is *not force*, *unless* it be *reasonable force.*

This general truth should be applied to the initiation and progress, as well as the result, of every Congregational synod or council.

The call for a council must have the characteristics of veracity and charity in order to insure an authoritative result. The particular church which selects in shrewd selfish fashion the material for its construction of a council, superintends with architectural skill the details of the edifice it proposes to erect, and then shelters its spirit of disingenuousness and lying under the completed structure, may expect to feel the fabric falling into ruin over its own head. To pack a council, to manipulate it after the ways of politics, forsaken as they are of the spirit of God, is to secure an illusory and untrustworthy result. Of all kinds of chicanery ecclesiastical chicanery is most immoral. The call to a council, for whatever purpose the council be called, must, I repeat, be fair and ingenuous to insure an authoritative decree. The heavenly dove whose presence will alone consecrate the assembly may refuse to enter walls soiled with deceit. Moreover, the pressure of

state and partisan considerations should not be felt in the calling of a Congregational council. The motion of that General Court, which, in May 15, 1646, issued the call for a Congregational synod, was in spirit and expression opposed to the fundamental principles of Congregationalism. This call truly asserts that "the form of church government and discipline being agreed part of the kingdom of Christ on earth . . . must needs greatly conduce" to his honor and glory. But the proposal to give the "sanction of civil authority" to the form decreed by the synod is a vitiating element in the call. On account of the offence duly taken by the ministers of Connecticut to the call of the General Court for a synod in 1666, the court changed the name of the proposed gathering, and requested an assembly of the ministers of that State. But both this synod and the preceding one of 1657, called and in a manner pledged beforehand, as they were, to enforce by their decrees the provisions of the Half-way Covenant, could not fail to render decisions upon this subject which were devoid of authority: they were devoid of authority because they were devoid of sound Christian judgment. Necessarily and rightly it came to pass that they did not carry uniformity with them. They did not have genuine force, because they were separated from the source of force in principle. "We entreated and urged, again and again," says Rev. Increase Mather in his Preface to Davenport's pamphlet, "that this, which they themselves acknowledged was a principle of truth, might be set down for a conclusion, and then we should all agree. But those reverend persons would not consent to this." How accurate a picture does this appear to be of scenes enacted repeatedly since that time, and even in our own day! It was in the same line of con-

duct that an act of council removed Jonathan Edwards, on account of his opposition to the practices of the Half-way Covenant, from the pastorate at Northampton. Whenever we are tempted unduly to long for more *force* in the decrees of synods and councils, we may remind ourselves that it was the unbearable tyranny of such "*force*" which led Edwards to write to Mr. Erskine that he was "perfectly out of conceit of our unsettled, independent, confused way of church government in this land."

The deliberations as well as the call of a synod or council should be duly motived in order to secure a decree which has the authority of right Christian judgment. Sound deliberations are requisite in order to engender the force which is legitimate force, because, and as far as, it is reasonable force. An assembly of believers for purposes of a really mutual conference may always ask and receive the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. This enlightenment is requisite to the authority of their decree. "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us," is the valid claim which gave mandatory force to the letter from Jerusalem. But every thing in the management of the deliberations of an ecclesiastical council which is not pure and peaceable is a barrier against the revelation of the will of the Holy Spirit. All manipulating of votes, all influencing of opinion by suspicion, threats, or maligning, all selfish passion and low artifice, all brilliant but unsound rhetoric, and tricksy art of speech, are in themselves vicious, and tend to vitiate the result of ecclesiastical conclave. And he does not know the alphabet of church history who does not know that these things have been abundant in ecclesiastical conclave from the beginning of the fourth century until now. It is fit that frankness,

plainness, and charity should characterize Congregational councils. It is evident that their capture by the political intrigue or overweening influence of a few men is destructive of their character, and so, also, of their claim to authority; not that God cannot make the wrath of men to praise him, and in the last resort enforce his truth by human disingenuousness and self-deceit.

Too great heat or severity of temper, and a certain ingrained stubbornness of mind from which even the Congregational clergy are not wholly free, may also prejudice the deliberations of a council. When the great and good John Robinson and William Brewster returned to Leyden from their mission to the church at Amsterdam, they confessed that they had delivered their church's message "with some vehemence;"[1] but it does not appear that they had largely transgressed the limits of a manly Christian rebuke for the wrong, which, as they believed, had been committed. Mere conscientiousness will not, however, always insure advice which should be followed. There is an abundance of men, some of whom are occasionally sent to Congregational councils, of whom we may say, as does Dr. Leonard Bacon of the minority of the church in Guilford, "conscientious as well as wilful, perhaps the more conscientious for being wilful, certainly the more wilful for being conscientious."[2]

Wisdom, the adaptation of right means to worthy ends, as well as charity and veracity, should have a generous place in the deliberations of every Congregational council.

[1] See Genesis of the New-England Churches, p. 235.

[2] For an account of this instructive example of mishaps in the communion of churches see Contributions to Ecclesiastical History of Connecticut, p. 48, f.

Since, then, the purity and force of the call and of the deliberations of every council enter into its result, the character of the results of different councils will differ in respect to purity and force. The force of the decree will depend upon the men and motives which lie behind it; for the Spirit of God, if present at all, is in the men and the motives, not in the ink and paper of the decree. It is, therefore, not surprising or unreasonable that the advice of different councils should have a different degree of force, or even that different views should prevail as to the force which is in the advice of any council. The intemperate language which asserts, that, since the combined action of churches in councils and synods has the nature of a solemn covenant, therefore to break from this covenant is well-nigh blasphemous, and to hold loose from its check or control is to become "a pest to society,"[1] will have small convincing power over calm minds. On the other hand, the doctrine which is maintained by those who follow the language of Rev. Samuel Mather[2] — that councils can "neither pretend to nor desire any power that is juridical; that, "when they have done all, the churches are still free to accept or refuse their advice" — has too often been made a pretence for self-will and disorderly conduct. The decrees of such councils as have had the reasonableness that is secured by purity of motive, dispassionateness of judgment, wisdom in adapting means to ends, have seldom been wanting in both the appearance and the reality of force. We find the first synod of Congregational churches in New England (that of 1637), "comprising all the teaching

[1] See, for an example of such language, Congregationalism as Contained in the Scriptures, etc., p. 24, f.

[2] In his Apology for the Liberties of the Churches of New England, 1738.

elders throughout the country," engaged for twenty-four days in discussing the views which had been introduced among them by Mrs. Hutchinson. They wisely decided against these new views; and we are told, — perhaps, as we might suspect, with a touch of the exaggeration belonging to triumph, — "They who came together with minds exasperated, by this means depart in peace." But in "New-England's First-Fruits," written a few years later, we are further assured, "The matter came to such an happie conclusion that most of the seduced came humbly and confessed their errours in our publique assemblies, and abide to this day constant in the truth. . . . And from that time not any unsound, unsavourie and giddie fancie have dared to lift up his head, or abide the light amongst us."[1] "I have been touched," says Professor Park,[2] "by the moral sublimity of several councils which they (the elder Edwards and his friend Hopkins) attended, investigating for an entire day, and with more than a father's patience, the complaint of some hired laborer, and then adopting no magisterial tones, but adjusting their advice to his necessities, as if they were the exigencies of an empire." But the normal authority and force in fact of such decrees can never be reached by the hasty work of selected partisans, or by pushing through, against the judgment of others, certain crude expedients for displaying a manufactured and fictitious force. In declaring the faith of the churches, as did the framers of the Cambridge Platform and of the Saybrook Confession, the Congregational council or synod has all the force which belongs to the occasion and to the character of the

[1] Massachusetts Historical Collections, series 1, vol. i. p. 247.
[2] Fitness of the Church, p. 11.

men who compose it. When requested to advise in the discipline of some member of a particular church, or when themselves undertaking the discipline of a sister-church, the persons gathered to render a decision need always to remember that the real potency and permanency of their decision depend upon whether they can truthfully say, "It has seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." Even the same Rev. Richard Mather, whose law of the force of a council's decree has been recited, being himself rebuked by such a decree for "his inconsideration," and, although his fault is not so expressed, for his apparent criminal concealment of the truth, took the blame of his failing upon himself, and "freely submitted to the judgment and advice given."[1]

Let us further remember to avoid that disingenuous habit of logical see-saw, which leads so many to extol the Congregational council when its decision suits themselves, and to decry all councils whenever the decree of some one does not coincide with their views; to depreciate the authority which resides in the decree of a few plain men who give their best judgment upon the simple matter before them, and to pine for the exhibition of a new force through the judgment of the selected and learned leaders among the clergy, who can talk upon all difficulties with an equal confidence in their own methods for a universal and speedy settlement of them all. In fine, *the sole way to increase the authority of councils is to give them a more definite and trustworthy moral character.* And, if I am able to read our history aright, they by no means attain to this character in the same proportion as they become more distinctively ecclesiastical, or more under the influence of

[1] Massachusetts Historical Collections, series 1, vol. v. p. 277, f.

clerical ambition, and zeal for individual opinion. This history shows that contempt of councils has been bred, both by a too frequent and injudicious or disingenuous resort to councils, and by the desire to tone up orthodoxy or discipline through a projected resort to some other kind of force than the force of reason.

But some of us are eager to know where we shall find our concrete *ultimatum* in authority. We want a kind of audible, visible, and tangible infallibility. With Roman Catholicism this concrete *ultimatum* is in the infallible pontiff. We cannot say, that, with the Presbyterian Church, it is in the Westminster Confession and the Book of Discipline, because the further decision of the courts of Presbyterianism must be invoked to determine, in each case which arises, what is a satisfactory accord of each man with his accepted confession or with his promised submission to the discipline. But where, in the Congregational churches, shall we look for that declaration of truth and law which cannot be gainsaid or resisted? What, or whose decision, shall be to us the end of controversy? Or, to illustrate the general question in a more specific form of inquiry, What shall individuals and churches do with the decree of a Congregational council? In reply we must say, that, if the decree does not call upon them for any course of action, they can fitly do nothing with it, except carefully to note its existence, and then to remember it as contributing one item, of larger or smaller importance, to the common-law fund of the churches. This particular decision, then, becomes a precedent to be quoted, not for perpetual control, but for continuous advice in forming and issuing other subsequent decisions. But if the decree of the council call for action by certain individuals or churches, it is the duty of those

individuals and churches, thus called upon for action, more intimately than others to consider such decree. They must receive the decision of the council addressed them, whether it come in the form of advice, or request, or exhortation, or rebuke, or admonition, as presumptively the true word of the Lord to their souls. They must consider it without prejudice against it: nay, they must consider it with prejudice in its favor. They are right in presuming that the judgment of their brethren, brought by good motives together, and desiring to render for them sound judgment, is better than their own unaided judgment. Only in case that the decision of the council plainly appear to be vitiated by untruthfulness or uncharitableness, may they quickly put it aside; and, even in this case, only when they have signified to their brethren and to the world their reasonable grounds for refusing to consider further such a decision. If the decision of the council, indeed, come very close to them, they may well prepare themselves for more careful searching of themselves and of it together by a day of fasting and prayer. They must seek to see light in the divine light. They must seek for light until they have clear light. They must use all means to see matters in uniformity among themselves, and in accord with the brethren from whom the word comes to them. If it be possible, by any right means, within any reasonable period of time, to make the judgment of the council their own judgment, they must rejoice to have it so; must signify to all their penitence, or faith, or humility, or charity, as the case may especially require. But, if all means fail for securing in their minds a judgment corresponding to the one rendered by the council, they must regretfully and frankly signify the effort they have made and their reasons for failing in

the effort. Such use of the result of Congregational councils will give them abundant *force*. Such is the only Christian and Congregational use for the decree of a council. More force in a more noble and concrete form of manifestation than this it is not rightly permitted for human ecclesiastical tribunals to secure. It is reported that a minister belonging to the majority who had just pushed through a resolution in a certain ecclesiastical body replied to the inquiry of a layman, as to what had been done, I presume rubbing his hands with the glee of victory, "We have it all settled."—"Settled!" said his lay-brother. "What have you settled? Have you settled *me?*" The concrete *ultimatum* of Congregationalism is to be found only in the declaration of the absolute truth: this declaration must be sought in all means, and is never the mere verbal pronouncement of any council or synod.

All the truths to which attention has just been called, as concerning the Congregational council or synod in the stricter sense of those words, hold equally good, so far as I am able to discover, with respect to every form of the standing council. Consociations, State Conventions and Conferences, and even a National Synod, are not uncongregational, if they originate freely and fairly from the churches, and if they conform with the principles already set forth as characteristic of our church order. The seeming conflict between the declaration of the Cambridge Platform,[1] that synods "cannot exercise church censures in way of discipline, nor any other act of church authority or jurisdiction," and the practice which grew up in accordance with its other declaration, "It belongeth unto synods and councils to debate and determine controversies of faith and cases of con-

[1] Chap. xvi. sect. 4.

science," has marked all our history hitherto. This conflict it is which has largely led to the more debatable uses of our standing councils. The early fathers of New England were favorable to consociation. They used the term to denote that a number of churches conveniently situated "come to an explicit agreement of church communion, and settle the mode of carrying it into effect."[1] "Consociation of churches," say the members of the synod of Boston in 1662, "is their mutual and solemn agreement to exercise communion, in such acts as aforesaid, amongst themselves, with special reference to those churches which by Providence are planted in a convenient vicinity, though with liberty reserved without offence to make use of others, as the nature of the case or the advantage of opportunity may lead thereunto." As a matter of fact, a very considerable portion of all the Congregational churches in the country are now in some form consociated: they have, that is, standing forms of communion with one another, of which forms they have agreed, to a greater or less extent, and in various ways, to avail themselves. Especially in the West has one or another form of consociation grown out of the workings of the so-called Plan of Union.

It would be hard indeed to show why churches of Christ may not, if charity and veracity permit, associate themselves in these various ways. The principle of the autonomy of the local churches is frequently alleged against the practice of consociation and other forms of the standing council. But this very principle, within certain limits, secures to the local churches the privilege of adopting, at their discretion, any one of the available forms of communing with one another. How, indeed, after giving full recognition to this principle,

[1] See article, by Dr. Leavitt, in the Christian Spectator, 1831, p. 370.

shall any one proceed to argue that any church, or community of churches, living in the enjoyment of self-control, may not yield up to the common interest the expression, through an organized body of ministers and laymen, of this their inalienable right of self-control? The churches are autonomous in instituting ways of communion and common endeavor, as truly as in any of their activities.

It cannot be denied, however, that many snares are likely to be hidden in the path along which the churches must travel to reach the results of these methods of delegated control. The very words, quoted above, in which the synod of 1662 utters its opinion, so favorable to the consociating of churches, are calculated to render us wary of some of these snares.

The source of the authority of the consociation or convention is always in the mutual and solemn agreement which the particular churches make to exercise communion among themselves in a specified way. To suppose that this agreement can be made so as to cover every act of the standing council (whatever that act may be), and so as to oblige the consociating church, without subsequent consideration, and under penalties of admonition or excision, to do what this council decree, is indeed to contradict the principle of the freedom of the churches. The authority of the churches as consociated with respect to one another as particular churches remains only a delegated authority. Every act of the consociation or convention may be passed freely under review by every particular church in the body, and accepted or rejected according to the best judgment of that church. But the consociating church should treat the advice or decree of the standing council (consociation) of which it is a member in the same

respectful and considerate and prayerful manner which has already been commended in the case of the council proper. Nor should those churches which abide by the decision of the majority in the consociation or convention, *for that reason alone* regard the dissenting minority, even although it consist of only one church, as separated from their communion.

Moreover, this declaration of the synod of 1662 reserves liberty for every consociating church without offence to make use of other churches in communion rather than of those with whom it is consociated, and of other ways of communion rather than of those provided in the consociation. Any church may take advice, although itself a member of the *quasi* standing council, from churches not connected with the council; and, when it thus takes advice, the sister-churches consociated have no right to take offence.

The difficulties that encompass these ways in which the particular churches may commune with one another, as well as the power which resides in Christian charity and good sense to overcome the difficulties, have been exemplified in the consociations of Connecticut and in the conventions of the North-western States. The language of the Saybrook Constitution may be regarded as designedly ambiguous: at any rate, it could not have seemed to the two parties, in its interpretation, any more distinctively favorable to each of the conflicting views, if it had been designed to express them both. From the very first, and even by its framers, it was diversely interpreted. This fact illustrates one of the dangers of every form of the standing council. Two parties are liable to arise, according as the stricter or more liberal interpretation of its provisions and design is adopted by different ministers and churches. Then

the one party calls the other by the opprobrious and deadly name of Independency; the party of the second part retorts by accusing the party of the first part of Presbyterianizing; and each concludes that the other is schismatical. In the result we have a further illustration of the truth that nothing divides Congregationalists more than the set effort to be formally united.

The same mischief is likely to arise in the creation of a new form of the standing council, to be called the National Council. We have no right to underrate the risk of this mischief, however favorable we may be to the National Council. Nothing can seem, abstractly considered, more helpful to the due manifestation of the real unity which exists amongst all the particular visible churches called Congregational than to have a fraternal gathering of all their representatives in the entire nation. These representatives are to be conceived of, of course, as coming from east, west, north, and south, and all amicably and ingenuously consulting over the interests of their church order. Those interests, as they are represented in each locality, and then gathered together for a more complete and impressive representation, may well be considered in a great and representative assembly. And do we not feel the need of a more organic expression of our unity? Do we not, or at least do not many of our representative men, even suppose that the centralizing and centripetal tendency must be evoked to counteract those centrifugal and dissipating tendencies which are working our disorganization and ill fame before the other denominations? Why, then, should not this standing council called National aid in organizing and expressing the unity of our common life? Let us at once grant the possibility of such aid from such an organization. Let

the National Council proceed in its beneficial work of centralizing. Let it promulgate a new declaration of faith. Let it advise all our great benevolent boards as to the will of the churches. Let it even arrange for a stricter separation between the order of the laity and the order of the clergy. Let it define the bounds of orthodoxy, and practically assert the view that Congregationalism is one among many denominations. What then? Some of the pastors now supposed to be Congregational may not admire the centralizing tendency, and may remain aloof from the so-called National Council. Are they, either by suspicion or *de facto*, to be set into a class apart, so that there shall be two kinds of Congregational pastors, — viz., those who will have all united, whether all will be united or not; and those who will not be united with all the others, whether the majority will them to be united or not? The benevolent boards may not take the advice of the National Council: they may prefer to fall back upon the advice of the churches rendered in some less formal way. Are we, then, to have two kinds of benevolent societies called Congregational, — one which accepts the advice of the National Council, whether it deems the advice sound or not; and one which does not accept such advice, even when it deems it to be most sound? Some of the pastors and churches now called Congregational may not choose to adopt the creed, or may even feel called upon to signify their rejection of it. Shall we, then, have two kinds of Congregational churches, — one which is orthodox, because it has accepted the national creed; and one which is suspected of heresy, because it has refused to yield acceptance? Shall we, perhaps, end by having another denomination, as some are even now most thoughtlessly and unkindly

urging the result? Surely no advocate of the National Council definitely proposes such issues; and yet it is not easy to answer these questions previous to the requisite experience which is their answer. As for ourselves, we have a moderate amount of good hope concerning the benefit of a National Council. But so long as the work of centralizing begins with the cry of alarm, the crack of the whip, the announcement of set determination to drive measures in spite of remonstrance, and regardless of objections, and so long as the work of opposing centralization continues to consist in another cry of alarm, a wild scurrying toward the solitudes before the crack of the whip, and the announcement of a determination to keep entirely clear of the course along which this team of centralizing forces is to be driven, we may wisely remain quiet, and remind ourselves of the lessons of our past experience. Nothing else so tends to divide Congregationalists as the determination at all hazards to be united. The tendency to create parties and partisan feeling in the churches belongs to every form of the communion of churches through the standing council. The risk is that men with high convictions of the necessity of instituting their favorite measures for the relief of difficulties and the correction of abuses will carry these measures with a high hand. Schism is the inevitable result. The attempt at *such* communion brings the partial or total loss of a *real* communion.

The relative unimportance of the lay-element is another snare in which all standing councils are liable to be taken. John Wise informs us, that at the synod of 1679, some of the churches having sent their pastors without lay-delegates, the synod "would not allow those pastors to sit with them until they had prevailed

with their churches to send brethren also." He warns the ministers not to consider themselves as "a distinct estate from the churches;" assures them, that, in the calling of councils, the churches are their superiors, and, "upon a severe interpretation of their canons," the churches may, if they please, leave the ministers at home.[1]

Whatever may be observed and predicted concerning the hazard to Congregational principles of all forms of consociating churches does not, however, invalidate the privilege, or disprove the benefit. All these forms, even those which have most nearly resembled the presbytery and synod, have, upon the whole, proved helpful ways of expressing and energizing the united activities of the particular visible churches. They all do not succeed in contravening the quaint declaration of Davenport: "The Catholic church is not visible as a church, and the Church that is visible is not Catholic." But they may all be made to serve in the direction of rendering visible the holy catholic church. Some of the most truly fraternal, liberal, and Congregational of men, have lived happily and usefully together in the more strict of these ways of communion; and not a little of ecclesiasticism has sheltered itself under the plea for a freedom from that very evil. The constitution of the district conventions and of the General Convention of Wisconsin was formed under the workings of the so-called Plan of Union, and is a shockingly Presbyterianizing document; but I can testify, from more than eight years of happy experience in this fraternity, my belief that a more genuinely liberal and fraternal body of Congregational ministers and laymen is nowhere to be found.

[1] See Quarrel of the Churches, part ii. sect. 1.

We may, then, approve the communion and consociation of churches, as does Davenport, while, at the same time, adding some cautions from Mr. Cotton's "Keys" and from "Mr. Shepheard's and Mr. Allen's Defence of the Nine Positions, in Answer to Mr. Ball."[1] From the "Caution" of the last-named gentlemen we quote these words: "Association of divers particular Churches, we hold needful, as well as the combination of Members into one Church; yet so, as there be no Schism of one from another, nor usurpation of one over another; that either one should deprive the rest of peace, by Schism, or many should deprive any one of its power by usurpation. . . . Consociation of Churches we would have cumulativè (not in words, but in deed) to strengthen the power of particular Churches: Not privative, to take away any power, which they had from the gift of Christ before. For, as on the one side, it may seem strange, that one Church offending should have no means of Cure by the *conceived power* of many; so, on the other side, the danger may appear as great, and frequently falls out, that, when many Churches are scandalous, one innocent church may be hurt by the Usurpation of all. And hence we see not, but that Fraternal Consociation is the best Medicine to heal the Wounds of both."

It remains that we should briefly consider those ways of the communion of churches which have been classified under the terms "indirect" and "formal." The indirect and formal ways of the application of the principle of the communion of churches comprise, besides those societies and boards organized for benevolent enterprises which will receive a measure of special attention, all the various organizations that are of distinctively clerical characteristics. The so-called Association of

[1] Power of Congregational Churches, p. 146, f.

Ministers is the typical form of such organizations. Many of our conventions, conferences, and consociations, however, show a marked liability to lapse into this form, and become really and practically little more than associations of ministers.

There can be no doubt, of course, that ministers have the same right as other classes of society, based upon grounds of law and common morals, to form themselves into fraternal *bunds* and various forms of communion. There is, perhaps, as little doubt that such associations have a right to existence, based upon grounds of pure Christian morality, whenever it appears that they may be made useful to the churches and to the general cause of Christian progress. What however, is the relation which these associations sustain to the communion of the churches? It is apparent at once, that this relation cannot well be otherwise than practically most intimate. Of necessity, the terms of admission to the ministerial association must have much to do with the terms exacted by the churches for admission into the order of their pastorate; and this will happen without any formal agreement of the churches to place themselves under ministerial tutelage for instruction as to the men fit for their offices. The candidate who has been examined and licensed by the clerical association is commended as fit to the churches: he is in the place of the physician or lawyer who has obtained his full certificate of professional attainment. The man who has failed to gain membership in the association, or who has, for any reason, lost a membership once gained, cannot stand before the churches upon equally advantageous terms as a candidate for the pastoral office. However much we may deny the theory of any jurisdiction or authority over the particular churches or their councils, as be-

longing to or emanating from the ministerial body, practically such authority and jurisdiction will be largely recognized. Doubtless this informal recognition is, on the whole, most beneficial.

It is necessary, then, that we should at once place these ministerial bodies, so far as they have influence upon the relations of the particular churches, on their proper basis of principle. If they are indirect and yet formal ways of the communion of churches, — and such, to a large extent, they must necessarily be, — they are governed by the principles already enunciated. Genuine love for Christ's people, and free but veracious expression of such love, must motive all the measures of these ecclesiastical bodies. To secure such motive is of more importance than to organize the clerical force of the churches into more compacted and expressive forms.

The history of the formation of such distinctively ministerial societies in our church order is very interesting and instructive. We have already seen the truth of history, that two tendencies — the one toward the exclusive self-control of the particular churches, and the other toward the more formal use of the principle of the communion of churches for the purpose of controlling those churches — have been struggling together from the beginning until now. We are at this point called upon to notice another truth of history. The tendency toward centralizing the forces of our church order has repeatedly suffered defeat from the spirit of independence which is in the particular churches themselves. Now, no body of men, whenever strongly advocating and pushing this centralizing of forces, can fail to come into conflict with this spirit of independency. This spirit of independency is now in all the Christian

churches, of whatever church order or denominational name. Not to acknowledge it is either ignorantly to overlook it, or intelligently to propose to check it. To acknowledge it should lead us intelligently to brook and guide it. At any rate, this spirit of self-control is, I repeat, firmly seated in our churches; it has not yet been exorcised; it will not easily be cast down or cast out. When, then, the centralizing tendency, the tendency which seeks for some more compacted and seemingly forceful forms of controlling evils, meets this counter tendency, — the spirit of independence, which is wise or unwise, which is crude self-will or intelligent freedom, as the case may be, — its customary and inevitable resort is to ecclesiasticism. What the churches, led by their pastors, do not accomplish or will not undertake, the clergy as a class may be induced to try. This tendency, therefore, strives to obtain enlarged expression for itself by enlarging the powers of the clergy. The history of our church order will especially show, what the general history of the church will confirm, that *the effort to express the centralizing force as a rule takes the form of ecclesiasticism.* In the history of Congregationalism the effort to tone up the slackening strings of our harp has invariably resulted in a song to the praises of some form of the clerical association. These praises have generally been preceded or accompanied by lamentations bestowed upon the weakness and unsatisfactoriness of so-called mutual councils. The assumption has repeatedly been made, that if we could have *some means of expressing force through a more distinctively clerical body*, like the presbytery or synod of the Presbyterian Church, then we should see *more results of genuine and beneficent and rational force.*

To illustrate what has just been said let us take but a glance at the history of ministerial associations. As early as 1633 a number of ministers of Massachusetts Bay agreed to meet together once a fortnight for conference concerning the interests of the churches. Mr. Skelton and the erratic Roger Williams, who were then ministers of the church at Salem (although the latter had not been formally inducted into his office), held aloof from this meeting, out of fear that it might grow into a presbytery, or some form of ecclesiastical tribunal. The others, then, all decidedly and unanimously expressed themselves of the opinion that no church or person can have any power over another church; and in fact they scrupulously abstained in these meetings from the slightest show of a disposition to exercise jurisdiction over the churches. Indeed, there are few signs of any marked tendency to constitute a semi-juridical body out of the Congregational ministry until a century and a half later. The germinal and tender stages in growth of this tendency are thus described by Rev. John Wise,[1] whose words I quote at length as most amusing and instructive, but without expressing confidence in the perfect accuracy of the view espoused by this writer: "About thirty years ago, more or less," declares Mr. Wise, "there was no appearance of the associations of pastors in these Colonies, and in some parts and places there is none yet. But after the country had suffered much in the slaughters and depredations committed by the heathen, and by some other afflictions, the neighboring ministers in some counties met to pray together, &c., and for no other intent that I ever knew or heard of. But after they had continued their meetings for some years, and others, following the

[1] Quarrel of the Churches, part i. sect. viii.

example, began to convene together and communicate cases, as best suited each person, and at last perceiving they were almost gotten into a classical form before they tho't of it, they began to give their meetings the specious titles of classes, associations, and ecclesiastical conventions, &c., as securely as though these titles were a fruit growing out of our own constitution, and by degrees began to dream that they were really and *de jure* what their new titles and late custom had made them only *de facto;* and time increased their inclinations and purposes to compass a more formal and compleat settlement. It is certain their opportunities were considerable, the keys of the church-treasures being put into their hands. The more the main point is studied, the more glory appears to feed men's ambition, like the impression by the eye on our great parents in paradice (Gen. iii. 8). The tree was pleasant to the eyes, a tree to be desired. Alas! alas! empire and supream rule is a glorious thing. *Parcere subjectis et debellare superbos* is a very royal business. Now this conceit did begin pretty much to predominate, especially in some gentlemen that were inclin'd to Presbyterain principles, men of worth and learning, who, improving their advantages of sense and influence to intreague others of a lower set of intellectuals, &c., bro't the business so near to a conclusion, as you find it in the last recited proposal, wherein you have the main of this history contained, like Homer's Illiads, in a nutshell." The proposal here referred to is certainly significant, and reads as follows: "8thly, And finally, That ministers disposed to associate endeavour, in the most efficacious manner they can, to prevail with such ministers as unreasonably neglect such meetings with their brethren in their proper associations, that they

would not expose themselves to the inconveniencies that such neglects cannot but be attended withal." Here, indeed, is fraternal communion with a vengeance. "But to make short, and conclude my story," continues Mr. Wise, "when they had thus far advanced and ripened their design, out comes these proposals, like Aaron's golden calf, the fifth day of November, 1705." When we remember that the most significant previous proposal by the clergy to take matters into their own hands was perhaps the very modest one of Increase Mather, with nine other ministers, in 1699, and that this proposal by these ministers simply comprised their own determination and advice to pass certain candidates for the occupancy of their pulpits through a solemn examination, and when we consider that these sixteen proposals of the Boston Association which our author combated went to the length of giving the ministerial body power to direct when a council should be convened, power to act themselves with delegates from the consociated churches as a standing council, and virtual power to dictate pastors to the consociated churches, and even to discipline those churches, we cannot wonder that the ardent "pastor of a church at Ipswich" waxed somewhat sarcastical and satirical against them. The copious flow of acid from his pen quite neutralized the sixteen proposals. To this affair the author of the "Historical Sketch" ascribes that custom of disavowing "ecclesiastical authority," which has traditionally been common in all our ministerial bodies. The examination and approbation of candidates for licensure by associations of ministers is the only measure proposed among these sixteen, which has survived the rattling fire of the Ipswich pastor. This custom of licensure by clerical associations became

fixed in Massachusetts in the latter half of the eighteenth century, about a hundred years after the initiatory action of Increase Mather. In Connecticut it was provided for in 1708 by the Saybrook Platform.

The history of a similar movement to increase the authority of clerical bodies, as this movement was connected with the Saybrook Constitution, in Connecticut, cannot now be repeated. But how strong this movement was, we may form some judgment from the language used by the meeting held at Stratfield, March 16, 1709. It was there resolved, that "the *pastors* have *power*, with the *consent* of the messengers of our churches . . . *authoritatively and decisively to determine* ecclesiastical affairs." The power of issuing "*sentence of excommunication*" against individuals and churches was claimed for itself by this Fairfield Consociation: this power was practically to be given into the hands of the clergy.[1]

A still further attempt to bestow strict ecclesiastical authority upon clerical bodies was submitted to the General Association of Massachusetts in 1815. The attempt failed; and the work of the committee of May 9, 1844, reported in the form of a "Manual of Church Principles and Discipline," was scarcely more successful than each previous similar attempt. In illustration of a truth already noticed, we remark that the report of the committee of 1815 enumerates five reasons why mutual councils cannot remedy the evils which they propose to remedy by giving a stricter ecclesiastical authority to bodies practically clerical. The failure of mutual councils and the need of more centralizing force convinced this committee of 1815, of the expediency of reviving the sixteen proposals which John Wise had ridiculed more than a century before. A certain layman, in a

[1] Contributions to the Ecclesiastical History of Connecticut, p. 42.

controversial pamphlet,[1] gives to this proposal for a new system of church government the following lengthy but unattractive title: "A scheme for effecting the secession of certain churches from the old Congregational Church, and the establishment of a new form of church government for the seceders, under the title of the Massachusetts Grand Association."

In closing this brief and unsatisfactory treatment of the indirect and informal means of communion which the churches have through distinctively clerical associations, let these few truths of history be impressed upon our minds.

The genius and history of our church order are totally opposed to every form of ecclesiasticism, especially to that form which bestows authority upon the clergy as a class. No minister can, otherwise than as the chosen officer of a particular church, properly institute or carry any measure for the control, direct or indirect, of the particular churches. As one ordained by his brethren, his head is a consecrated head; and, after he ceases to be an officer in a particular church, he will necessarily continue to receive, what he will wisely refrain from claiming, a superior measure of confidence, affection, and influence, as one who has administered the sacred ordinances, and served in the preaching of the gospel. But clerical bodies *as such* can never have any control, except by way of such influence as the churches concede, without undermining the principles of our church order. Even the custom of receiving licensure from them is a matter of convenience, and conceded fitness of means to ends. Moreover, we rejoice to believe, that, as the kingdom of God comes more and more perfectly upon

[1] An Inquiry into the Right to change the Ecclesiastical Constitution of the Congregational Churches of Massachusetts.

earth, every semblance of an order of the clergy will more and more disappear. And the man with the truest spirit of the Christian minister will be the gladdest man of all to see all the Lord's people prophets and priests and kings before the Lord.

Our history may also convince us that there is no safeguard against any form of evil to be found in the exercise of authority by ecclesiastical and clerical bodies. The most injurious practical mistake made in the working of our church order in this country was an affair of the ministers. The Plan of Union is a notable instance of the ill effects which may follow when ministerial meetings take upon themselves to manage affairs without deferring them to the judgment of the churches. This plan was first agreed upon by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church and the General Association of Connecticut, in 1801: it was subsequently adopted by the General Association of Massachusetts. The compact, although made by the latter body with a disclaimer of jurisdiction over the churches, was one which, there is little doubt, these associations had no right to make at all; and there is less doubt that the making of the compact caused to Congregationalism the loss of many hundred churches and of thousands of individual members.

In general we are to hold, that, whenever the centralizing forces of our church order seem to demand a more energetic expression in the working of our polity (and times of such demand occur), this expression should be made in the form of drawing more compactly together the particular churches, and not in the form of separating and compacting together a body of the clergy. The pastors of churches must lead their churches to a more real and efficient communion with one another:

the ministers are not to suppose that a more real and efficient communion can come to the churches through any increase and compacted organizing of their ministerial authority.

In a closing word let me recall the thought to those pure, holy, and nourishing principles, from which we started in our excursion over rough and debatable grounds. The prayer for a manifested unity amongst his people lies still upon the sacred heart of Jesus Christ. Were he not our now glorified Redeemer, we might even fear that the longing for this consummation of his desire would weary and burden that sacred heart: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." To refuse the manifestation of this union for which Jesus prayed, and to force upon others divisive forms of manifesting a union in opinion or action which is not real, are alike to contravene this holy prayer. Schism, and hierarchical or ecclesiastical systematizing, engender each the other; and both are together to vanish when the Father answers the prayer of the Son by causing his spirit to dominate the entire church.

LECTURE X.

THE SELF-PROPAGATION OF CONGREGATIONALISM.

It is self-evident that the principles, the consideration of which has thus far been kept constantly before our minds, must have very important practical applications to the growth of the kingdom of God on earth. Other systems of church order, even those which give narrowest scope and most meagre acknowledgment to these principles, have, indeed, been integral parts of the historic manifestation of this kingdom. But the wider scope and more generous acknowledgment of the principles are necessary to the final manifestation of the kingdom. We can scarcely trace the organic development of the Church of Christ from his day until the present, without admitting that this development was during several centuries expressed chiefly in the hierarchical system of Rome. Nor can the history of the Jewish Church be studied as an organic whole without admitting the fact that the triumph of the spirit of hierarchy in that church did not utterly check its general development. Several of those elements of the true church polity which its later exhibition professedly derives from the New-Testament churches, these New-Testament churches themselves derived from the Jewish Church. Such elements of Congregationalism survived the compression and stricture which the Jewish Church

felt continuously, and in increasing measure, from the return of the exiles to the breaking of its bands in Christ.

We do not, then, claim that a free manifestation and obvious growth of Congregational principles are necessary to the existence, or even, within certain limits, to the development, of the Christian Church. That wider outreach and forward movement of those divine forces which make for righteousness and for the final supremacy of the divine self-revelation in redemption, and which we call in their totality the power of the kingdom of God on earth, is certainly not altogether measured by such thoughts as have occupied us in this Course of Lectures. And yet these thoughts are most intimately concerned with the progress of this kingdom. They will be yet more and more intimately concerned with this progress as its centuries roll onward in the great world-period which is taken out of infinite time. The principles of the true Church Polity are by their very nature certified to have power to exert a growing influence over regenerate men. By this same nature they are made fit to exercise more and more of influence over the world at large. To Congregationalism *considered as a matter of principles*, the future obviously belongs. As a matter of principles, it is certain to triumph, and possess the church catholic, as fast as the church catholic becomes visibly catholic, and possesses the earth. We should have all the confidence in the ultimate triumph of this church order which makes the Romanist so strong: we should, however, quite purge this confidence of those elements of weakness, error, and violence, which have brought upon Romanism so much of her guilt and shame.

This certainty of the future, which belongs to these

principles, is made apparent by a thoughtful consideration, especially of those two which we have recognized as the primary and fundamental. More and more will the Word of God in Scripture, as that Word is read at the point of illumination where the rays of Christian reason converge upon it, have control over the constitution and life as well as doctrine of the church. More and more abundantly will the work of the Divine Spirit be manifested, more and more gladly acknowledged, among men. As the formal and the material principles of our church order gain more perfect control over all the disciples of Christ, these disciples will, in fact, be won to its other principles, if not to its name; and whether to the name or not, if only to the principles, we scarcely care to inquire.

A careful examination of each one of those seven principles which have been designated as secondary, or derived, will show that the promise of the future belongs also to them. They are principles given to the church in the doctrine and history of the New Testament: they are, therefore, designed for the church in all ages and nations. The triumph of counteracting forces for a time may be regarded as only preparatory for the final triumph of these principles. When the ancient prophetic spirit of Judaism slumbered and slept, it was only that it might awake invigorated at the coming of the Bridegroom, Christ. The priestly spirit which had doubtless, in the service of the divine pedagogy, prepared the way for the setting-up of the great high priest, was denied entrance into the temple by Him whose way it had prepared. The principle of Christ's exclusive rulership, the principle of individual equality and self-control, the principle of a regenerate membership, the principle of the autonomy of the local

church, the principle of the communion of the churches, the principle of conserving the results of common experience, the principle of progress through individual inquiry, — to these principles the future of the Church of Christ will certainly conform its institutions, customs, laws, and entire manner of life. The forces which have hitherto counteracted these principles are teachers in the great divine pedagogy of the Christian Church; but they are teachers with whose services the great Master of Instruction will more and more dispense. Their work has been temporary, has been in order that the other forces which express themselves in such principles as are of enduring authority might have more room to work.

It follows, from what has been said above, that the application of the principles of Congregationalism to the growth of the kingdom of God on earth is both most important, and most certain really to be made. It follows, also, that this application should be attempted as widely and speedily as possible by their advocates. Congregationalists, that is to say, are morally bound to disseminate their principles. And if we hold that the teaching of these Lectures, in so far as they have considered Congregationalism as essentially a matter of principles, is true, then it is obvious that the obligation to disseminate the principles is an obligation to self-propagation. It is of the self-propagation of Congregationalism that we are now to treat. The practical truth which dominates and gives force and character to all the other subordinate truths of our treatment is this: *The propagation of Congregationalism as a matter of principles to be embodied in an ever-increasing number of New-Testament churches is the duty of Congregationalists.*

We do not wonder that many of the most thoughtful, erudite, charitable, and tender Christian men have become weary with the endless strife of sects. We have at present no new sect to propose, the joining of one's self to which shall at once put an end to strife. The end of sectarian strife is to come, surely not by the multiplication of sects, and not, as we believe, by the triumph of any one sect over all others, but, when the Father answers the prayer of the Son, by the cessation of the spirit of sect from the face of the whole earth. Not as a sect, then, but as offering the form for manifesting that unity in unison with liberty which the spirit of Christ secures, can we urge the ardent and vigorous self-propagation of the Congregational church order.

But, furthermore, the course of our thought, as it has been made luminous by light from the history of this order, should by this time have convinced us that Congregationalism is, as a matter of principles, admirably adapted for self-propagation under all circumstances, and through all classes and periods in the history of men. This adaptation follows from its essential fitness to the nature of man as a rational soul, as a social being, and as a citizen, or subject of civil government. This adaptation is also seen in the fact that such a church polity founds the church upon regenerate life, conserves in its vital sources the purity of that life, and imparts a broad and fraternal charity to all who share in this regenerate life. There is no more self-convicting and mortal, nay, cowardly and suicidal, heresy regarding this polity than to claim its fitness only for provincial uses, selected classes, opportune seasons, and favoring circumstances. In brief, to admit that this polity is not adapted for man as a regenerate man is

to admit that it is not the New-Testament order at all: it is to admit that it is not worthy to stand even as *one* New-Testament order among many which may equally well lay claim to the name. Imagine the scorn that Jesus and Paul would have bestowed upon any church order which asserted its own fitness to deal only with the educated and selected classes! If Congregationalism cannot manage and religiously master the negro in the South, as, indeed, some have taught that it cannot, let it confess itself so far unapt, and unworthy of the name of a Christian system of planting and controlling churches. No essentially provincial form of religion can be a New-Testament religion. No church order which could not bind and hold in church bands converted souls in all places of Christ's dominion would ever have received apostolic sanction. Just so far as Congregationalism is by its principles or essential form distinctively unfitted for man as man, just so far is it self-convicted of being distinctively unphilosophical and unchristian. The principles of the true church polity will not, indeed, dispense with men and means to carry them out in the practical exigencies of the Christian life. They will work best among the best men. They may, like all other divinest principles, for a time apparently succumb under a great weight of ignorance and sin. But the ignorance to them most oppressive is that which reigns in the minds of the church itself. And the sin which most nearly defeats the advance of these principles is the sin of indifference and confessed weakness on the part of their professed advocates and friends.

Fortunately for the hopes of existence and growth which belong to our church order, this restrictive view of its power in self-propagation by no means accords

with the facts of history. Modern missions are demonstrating again to the dull and sluggish minds of the church the very truths which were taught with difficulty in the beginnings of Christianity. The first great practical heresy of the Christian Church was the belief that Christianity is in its purest form adapted only to the few. The Apostle Paul wrought and suffered for the defeat of this Judaizing heresy. When, then, it is claimed that a pure church polity, from lack of strength or from any other imagined lack, can be worked only in essentially the same Judaizing and restricted fashion, we have our appeal both to principles and also to the facts. In reply to the accusation that Congregationalism is not strong enough for the West, Dr. Post has uttered the following eloquent rebuke:[1] "Congregationalism was strong enough for the turbulence, the heterogeneousness, the violent and the voluptuous sin, the ruffianism, and the courtly vice of the ancient world; for Jew, Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free; strong enough for dissolute Corinth, volatile Athens, for tumultuary Ephesus, for many-tongued Alexandria, and that vortex of nations, Rome; strong enough for churches gathered from fanatic Judaism and bestial heathenism; strong enough for the sensual Cretan, the passionate Iberian, the versatile Ionian, the haughty Italian, the Syrian Sybarite, the migratory borderers of the African and Arabian desert, and the motley millions that fermented around the world's centres of commerce, luxury, and empire; strong enough for all these, and yet not strong enough for our American West!" A rebuke as eloquent and forceful in the appeal to facts might be made by any advocate of our church order from the material furnished out of the experience,

[1] See American Congregational Union Addresses, May, 1854, p. 87.

among outlying peoples, of our American Board of Foreign Missions.

We are, then, entitled to the fullest confidence in the self-propagating powers of the highest and purest form of church polity. Congregational churches, in so far as they give form to the principles of this polity, should be propagated, as a matter of principle, by Congregationalists. And this work of self-propagation they may undertake and continue with hope of marked success.

But we are at once advised to review our conclusions in the light of certain facts. It is asserted, with large display of statistics, and good measure of undoubted truth, that historic Congregationalism has fallen behind a considerable number of the denominations in the ratio and extent of its increase. And its fault or failure in self-propagation has been conspicuously manifest in this land of America, its most favorable and originally promising ground. We are reminded, and no doubt with substantial correctness, that this church order, in the matter of planting its own churches, achieved during the century from 1776 to 1876 a by no means flattering success. The facts are said to show that whereas, in 1776, the Congregationalists had in apparent adherents double the number of any other church order, in 1876 they stood seventh on the list; that while the population of the country was increasing eleven-fold, and the growth of churches in general was so far outstripping the growth of the population as to aggregate thirty-seven-fold, that while the Methodists increased three-hundred-and-thirty-fold, the Baptists seventy-fold, the Presbyterians seventeen-fold, the Episcopalians nine-fold, the Congregational churches grew only fivefold. The churches of this order grew, therefore, less than half as rapidly as the population at large, and less than

one-seventh as rapidly as the churches in general. And when we consider the prestige, the ancient privileges and early possession, of these churches, their large relative decline during this century becomes significant indeed.[1] As students of the forces at work in the history of religion, and as sincere admirers and defenders of New-Testament principles, we cannot be indifferent to such facts as these. We must inquire with eagerness as to the causes of this large relative decline.

In order, however, to understand the causes, we must not misconceive or misstate the phenomena; and, in order to the correct conception and statement of the phenomena, the two following distinctions must be kept in mind.

We must distinguish between churches called by name Congregational, and churches which, although not bearing this name, are, in regard to polity, really and distinctively Congregational. Dr. Dexter, on reviewing the statistics of the denominations in this country as they were reported in 1874 and neighboring years, finds, that, while the number of so-called orthodox Congregational churches was only 3,431, the whole number of churches "essentially Congregational in their form of government" amounted to no fewer than 31,446, or nearly three-sevenths of all the Christian churches.[2] We discover, then, that Congregationalism in this country, so far as it is a form of church government, can count among its adherents about nine times as many as bear the specific title which is chosen to set forth that form.

[1] For these or similar statements, and a discussion of the subject, see the following articles: article by Dr. W. W. Patton, New-Englander, October, 1876; article by Dr. Cushing, in Congregational Quarterly, October, 1876; article by Professor Diman, in North-American Review, January, 1876; article by Dr. Noyes, in New-Englander, July, 1879.

[2] See Congregationalism, p. 4, f.

But another much more important distinction remains to be noticed. We must distinguish between the self-propagation of Congregationalism *as a matter of principles*, and that same self-propagation as a matter of churches having a more definitely fixed and detailed correspondence to the ancient forms of our church order. We must distinguish between the diffusion of Congregationalism and the multiplication of churches governed in specifically Congregational form. The autonomy of the particular visible church is, indeed, an important and even a characteristic feature of Congregationalism. As a concrete manifestation, it is sometimes considered as containing the very essence of our church order, as being, indeed, that which constitutes this order a distinctive order among many others. But the growth of the concrete manifestation does not measure the entire development; for, in the larger view of history pragmatically considered, we must, as has already been made apparent, take into the account a congeries or fraternal *bund* of principles which have been growing together, and the growth of which cannot be satisfactorily explained without taking them all into the account. In asserting the autonomy of the particular church, the revolt of our fathers was, to be sure, against a kind of enforced conformity in the matter of church government. Such enforced conformity would not, however, be attempted by any Protestant sect in the present day, and could not be carried out, even by Romanism, in any country of Northern Europe. If the early Congregationalists had been living, for instance, in a communion like that of the modern Presbyterian Church, they would probably never have revolted against its form of government at all. But why do the Protestant sects by inclination, and even Romanism by con-

straint, now concede such a large measure of practical autonomy to the particular church? Why have the principles of the sects with regard to church government met with such change? and why has the Roman-Catholic Church, without any change of principles, been compelled to forbear, to dissemble, and to walk with caution before the popular will as expressed in the local congregation? These changes in respect to ecclesiastical self-government are, indeed, parts of a world-movement in history. The people are everywhere and in every thing coming to the front, and in the front henceforth they are destined forever to stand. Any individual or institution, therefore, be it a manifestation of religious, social, or civil life, which attempts to resist this great world-movement, will be ground to powder under its advance. To guide, enlighten, enlarge, and sweeten the life of the people, is the work of wisdom: it is also the work of cheer and hope.

Of this world-movement in history, — a movement which can be attributed to nothing weaker than the Omnipotent Spirit, to nothing less noble than the inbreathing of his life, — Congregationalism is itself a part; but Congregationalism is, on the whole, the most significant part of this movement, since it broke forth in its might when Luther, by his theses, called from the door of the Wittenberg Cathedral upon all Germany. But if our church order may be considered as one most notable part of a total effect, it must also be considered as a no less notable part of the cause of that effect. Congregationalism has itself modified all the denominations whose churches are spread throughout this country. Ideas and customs originally Congregational, and, from the first, continually propagated by New-England Congregationalists, are present and working in all the

denominations. And, furthermore, the self-propagation of Congregationalism as a matter of principles has not been bounded by the nearer shore of the ocean. "Principles," as says Dr. Post of this same subject, "extend more widely than their organisms. They will penetrate into organisms not their own, and progressively though silently modify and shape them to their own spirit. No system, however sealed and despotic, not even Romanism itself, can entirely withstand the influence of free church principles, silently blending and conspiring with the democratic genius of American institutions and the American mind."

Various indications clearly show the early self-propagating power of New-England Congregationalism in the soil of Old England itself. The authors of "A Letter of Many Ministers in Old England, requesting the Judgment of their Reverend Brethren in New England concerning Nine Positions," written as early as 1637, profess that the views and practices of Congregationalists in this country were taking root "with divers in many parts of the kingdom." The answer to the *Two- and Thirty Questions*, which was published in England the same year with the answer to the above letter, was, doubtless, not without considerable effect upon the formation of Independency in that country.[1] John Cotton's "True Constitution of a Particular Visible Church," afterwards reprinted under another title, also made no small impression in England. The total effect wrought upon the mother-country by the Congregationalism of this country may be in a measure estimated by the fact, that, in September of 1642, an invitation from certain members of Parliament came to Cotton, Hooker, and Davenport, "to assist in the synod" of most "grave,

[1] See article of Dr. Leonard Bacon, in New-Englander, July, 1878.

pious, learned, and judicious divines," whose business was "to consider and advise about the settling of church government" in England. This invitation was in anticipation of the ordinance convening the Westminster Assembly. In the debate and decisions of that assembly, the influence of the *New-England Way*, as advocated by Thomas Goodwin and his fellow-champions of the same cause, was powerfully felt.

What these principles have done by their self-propagation to advance education, to mould society, and to frame and control civil government, has already been made subject of admiring remark.

By no means the least important and notable element in the self-propagation of New-England Congregationalism has been its distinctive development of theology. The only distinctive contribution which the intellectual life of America has made to the world's fund of theological thinking is the so-called New-England theology. We need not believe that this development is a finality in theology; we need not suppose that it is all indisputably true, and superior to all other results of patient and erudite thinking. We should not require adherence to its distinctive tenets as a part of fitness for the Congregational ministry; nor should that ministry be unable to look as far away as Germany, or as far back in history as Augustine and Pelagius, for their materials of thought. New-England theology is not, indeed, the universe of theological thinking: it does not, perhaps, even comprise its sun, moon, and entire planetary system. But New-England theology is the only development of theology which this country has had the intellectual strength to produce; and it is, on the whole, the most important development of theology which can be traced to the eighteenth century. If Congregation-

alism had far fewer names of confessed adherents willing to call themselves frankly what they really are, it would still be entitled to a place upon the walls of church history where it might write conspicuous the names of its theologians, from Jonathan Edwards to Edwards A. Park.

We may, in view of the foregoing considerations, claim that the self-propagation of New-England Congregationalism is by no means to be measured by numbering the more strictly Congregational churches. To give principles to the world and to the churches, to move in the great currents of the divine life as it inflows, and moulds anew the forms of history, is a grander work and mission than to build up the most numerous and skilfully-compacted of denominations.

Yet we are by no means to underrate the significance of the ugly facts to which our attention has been called. The true church polity must submit itself to be tested, not simply by the New Testament, abstract reasoning, *a priori* correspondences with supposed forces of history, and promises of future more visible successes; it must also be tested by its concreter workings, its demonstrated ability to cope with obstacles as they exist; it must show inherent force to mould men as they are found, and verify its claims by doing the work of organization which manifestly needs to be done for the good of the world. Great ideas and principles need concrete expression: the greater the ideas and principles, the more numerous the concrete forms in which we may duly expect to find them expressed. And, inasmuch as Congregationalism magnifies the office and value of the particular visible church, the demand is just that it shall evince, besides a few general principles, many particular churches embodying those principles; besides invisible

ideas, visible men and women working amidst the hard conditions of life and under the intelligent domination of those ideas. If the invisible church, to modify a sarcasm of Schleiermacher, is not visible, the church that is visible will be mostly not-church. Any form of church life must necessarily value its own manifest power to deal with men for their bettering, more than it values any thing else but allegiance to Jesus Christ. And this allegiance itself bids every system of church life Go and conquer the world. There can, indeed, be no doubt that the failure of New-England Congregationalism more freely to propagate churches of its own order during the century from 1776 to 1876 indicates its departure from the principles of the New Testament. So far forth, then, it was not the ideal and true church polity. The New-Testament churches were most vigorously self-propagating. We must, then, inquire further into the causes of so large a relative decline in the number of Congregational churches in this country during the period above named.

These causes may be enumerated under three divisions or general heads of the inquiry.

We may, first of all, claim that certain large general causes, either beyond all human control, or at least beyond the control of the Congregationalists of the last century, have operated with relative disfavor toward this polity.

The comparatively recent development of modern Congregationalism has not as yet afforded it time to cope with older and elaborately organized ecclesiastical systems. Wickliffe has, indeed, been called "the modern discoverer of the doctrines of Congregational dissent." The English Puritans were, however, more fully the discoverers of these doctrines; the Pilgrim

Fathers and Puritans of New England, more fully still. But the unfolding of this polity even in this country has been in contact with, and in the face of, forms of church government that already had the definite outlines, the compacted forces, the settled customs, which belong to age. The Congregational system as compared with the hierarchical systems has in modern history some of the disadvantages of youth. The Methodists, whose astonishing growth is often placed in contrast with that of Congregationalism, have availed themselves of the hierarchical system. But Congregationalists have, from almost the first, found it very difficult to settle their own positions, and define themselves, with reference to existing denominations. They have scarcely yet succeeded in finding out how far they can be Presbyterians, and still remain Congregationalists. Their customs have hitherto exhibited much of the rawness of youth. Whereas the Book of Discipline will tell the Presbyterian in detail how the government of the church is to be carried on, and whereas, in the hierarchical systems, the higher orders of the clergy may be supposed to know the rules for the management of the affairs committed to them, who shall instruct the uninformed Congregational minister, when emergencies arise? We may reply, Common sense, or the Bible, or "sanctified common sense." But the question comes back, Whose common sense, and whose view of the application of biblical truth? This awkwardness of working is inevitable whenever any principles begin to seek for right methods of realizing themselves. It is the penalty which the church must pay for having, during centuries, neglected to acquire skill in the use of New-Testament principles. The blame of the awkwardness which belongs to this newness comes upon

us. The other churches too often laugh at the testing of that which, when tested, they are ready to use with profit to themselves. The first century and a half of Congregationalism in this country afforded only small experience concerning its relations to surrounding sects and denominations; this, for the simple reason that the field belonged so largely to it alone. And, since the adherents of other church orders have been pouring into our country, we have scarcely been able to determine in what relations the practical details of our polity should stand to these changed conditions of life.

The above remark may introduce the recognition of another unfavorable force. The nature of American immigration has been to our church order an unfavorable force. Large numbers have come to this country already tenaciously adhering to other forms of church life. Especially is this true of the Roman Catholics, the Lutherans, the Episcopalians: all these naturally prefer any other form of church polity to the Congregational, about the principles of which, indeed, they know little or nothing at all. Presbyterians from Scotland and England and Holland have arrived upon our shores; nearly all of them heartily believing in the Presbyterian polity, and not a few comfortably persuaded that its highest judicatory is the veritable general assembly referred to in Heb. xii. 23.

Closely connected with the working of this unfavorable cause stands another. The geographical position of early Congregationalism was essentially provincial. This provincial position was such as to require that it should go forth from its ancient ground in order to infuse itself into the main tides of immigration as they have flowed inward through the land. The centres of our church order in Eastern Massachusetts and

in Connecticut are still geographically aloof from the areas and courses of the national life. When New England itself is becoming so small a section of the whole country, it requires effort to prevent New-England Congregationalism from degenerating into an insignificant sect.

We should, perhaps, also consider that the comparative slowness of the development of Congregationalism is due to the nature of its development, as well as to the lateness of its favoring hour. It was originally a divine gift, made through spiritual guidance of the New-Testament churches to the Church of all time. It was a gift germinal and typical, though crude; tender, though fresh and vigorous. It suffered in the early centuries an arrest of development: it lay dormant and yet vital in the garden of the Lord through many mediæval centuries. In the sixteenth century in England it was dug out of its place of hiding and sleeping with the sword of the Word, — a sword which soon became the instrument of civil as well as ecclesiastical cleavage of ancient customs. In America it suffered through a century another arrest of development, which was chiefly due to neglect. The system is of the nature of those growths for the advance of which *common-wealth* interests and activities must be invoked. Systems which spring at once into perfection of being as the results of individual reflection and masterly skill may for a time far outstrip those, which, because they are common-wealth growths, must wait for the divine light and heat in the public brain and heart.

We are far, however, from believing, that, when accused of this lack of strength in self-propagation, Congregationalists may wholly excuse the lack by pleading any unconquerable stubbornness in the soil.

The seed is equal to self-propagation in the most stubborn soil; it must, however, be sown with faith and in tears; it must be, in husbandly hardihood and patience, subjected to cultivation.

We consider, therefore, in the second place, certain weaknesses closely inherent in this polity as it has been developed, and has operated hitherto, in this land. We cannot admit that these weaknesses are inherent in the very nature of the true church polity: they are such, however, as have been actually operative to its disadvantage through the immature condition of its development.

Among such weaknesses must we place a certain spirit of provincialism which was stamped upon Congregationalism in the places of its origin in this country, and which it was attempted to propagate in those other places where a more cosmopolitan form of applying its principles was demanded, and would have been both safe and possible. The claim of Dr. Dexter,[1] that flexibility of form belongs to Congregationalism, is entirely legitimate on grounds of principle; but the complaint of Dr. Post,[2] that New-England Congregationalists have opposed the advantage which might have been reaped from this flexibility, is also quite true as a matter of fact. The conservatism of the East has been altogether too tenacious of matters of form to give its church order a ready entrance in the West. Thus has the New-England church polity separated itself from the sympathies of the people in the country at large by a certain characteristic, inbred provincialism. America owes an immeasurable debt to New-England Congregationalism for the principles of civil and religious

[1] See Congregationalism, etc., p. 241.

[2] See American Congregational Union Addresses, May, 1854, p. 94, f.

liberty which it has made cosmopolitan; but why does America confess so little love toward the forms in which these principles were originally embodied? In part because of the disagreeable and haughty stiffness of the form in which it has been desired to propagate the principles. It has too often been found beyond the facility of New-England Congregationalists to understand the essential differences that exist between their own communities and those other communities in which they should have diffused their principles under new forms adapted to the differences.

Moreover, the one form differing from that of New-England Congregationalism, which was deliberately adopted by Congregationalists themselves for the instituting and disciplining of new churches in regions lying toward the West, was lamentably unfortunate. This form was not so much a new form of adjusting old principles to new exigencies, as a total surrender of the principles themselves. The surrender was tolerated under the impression that pure Congregationalism could not succeed in new regions, — an impression true enough, so long as we regard Congregationalism as a sect, but false indeed, as soon as we consider it as a matter of principles. The resulting unwise policy — the Plan of Union so called — has justly been designated an "attempt at union by compromise, or suppression of essential organic principles;" and, as has been truly asserted, this attempt "has bred manifold disasters, — internal agitations and oppugnancy, convulsions and disruptions." Probably no other one cause has so operated to check the self-propagation of Congregationalism. The motives to the Plan of Union were diverse; partly good, but unwise, in part almost wholly bad. There was a generous willingness to build up the kingdom of Christ at

the expense of denominational strength; but there was also an unwise lack of faith in the strength of New-Testament principles. By this compromise we are assured, respecting our church order, "She became a mere local arrangement, a glebe polity, an accident of time, place, and a certain phase of civilization, not a matter of essential and enduring principle at all." In consequence of this Plan of Union, "it is computed that four hundred churches, or more, have been gathered in the West, for the Presbyterian Church, by the benevolence of Connecticut alone." "And I have seen it stated," adds the author from whom I am quoting,[1] "by high Presbyterian authority, that not less than fifteen hundred of their churches are essentially Congregational in their origin and habits." Under this plan our money, our meeting-houses, our ministers, our members, were given to others, and, we are glad to add, our miseries also, if we may believe the lament of Dr. Baird, who declares, "All our troubles came from Congregationalism." In this gladness there is no malice; for these communicated miseries are only the pains from a growth of larger liberty and charity, which, imparted in a measure from our churches, will come to maturity in the Presbyterian Church. How unnecessary was this Plan of Union, and how mistaken the assumption that the free forms of Congregationalism are not adapted to Western society, we may judge from the effects which have followed the reversal of the plan. During the twenty-five years from 1854 to 1879 we had been more nearly accomplishing our legitimate work in the North-west. In this time, the churches of our order in that region had multiplied from four hundred and

[1] See, on this subject, an article in the Congregational Quarterly for October, 1876.

twenty to sixteen hundred and ninety-three. At the later date, sixty-eight churches had been planted in the South; nearly all of them since 1870. In these two regions, then, we have in the last quarter-century multiplied our churches more than four hundred and twenty fold.

Certain inheritances of the parish system, which make the house of God and the enjoyment of its ordinances subject to the power of exclusiveness, — such as the practice of having the pews owned and controlled by individuals; the practice of "lotting out the room" of the house of God, and assigning it according to unchristian distinctions; the habit of placing the Church of Christ in the power of the so-called parish for the control of its distinctively Christian work, — have hitherto been weaknesses in the working of our church system. The means used by our fathers to enforce, by civil enactments, conformity to their "standing order," served in their day to alienate the people, and turn them away in directions which have led them farther and farther aloof. The statutes against Separatists doubtless made Baptists of a number of churches which would otherwise have been Congregational. The amount of adverse influence exerted in these ways may be differently estimated; it can scarcely have been other than considerable; and this is not so much to be seen in the more immediate and direct results as in the more slow and silent working of a feeling of alienation. The restrictions placed by Congregationalists themselves upon their own church order through oppressive customs and civil enactments, however well meant, have invariably turned towards its injury.[1] They are the weights of

[1] See Contributions to Ecclesiastical History of Connecticut, pp. 123 and 263; New-Englander, vol. xi. p. 216; Historical Sketch, etc., pp. 168, f., 203, and note on p. 204.

tradition with which the fathers have loaded down their children.

This feeling of alienation, with its growing check upon the self-propagation of Congregationalism, has doubtless been increased by the exclusiveness of its theological thinking in the shape of Calvinistic dogma, and the exclusiveness of its dogmatic preaching. This fault or weakness has not consisted in excess of doctrine, or even in excessive height of supralapsarian doctrine. In the experience of the churches and in the practice of effective Christian preaching, very high Calvinism and very low Arminianism may join hands for the work of winning souls. The man who believes that he is elected may have essentially the same faith as the man who knows that he is converted. The common people have no more invincible objection to Calvinistic than to Armininian doctrine; but they have a very just and acute sense of repulsion towards those churches and preachers who substitute dogma for Christ's doctrine, and who spend their strength in confuting the alleged dogmatic errors of their brethren rather than in joining their voices to proclaim those truths of the gospel upon which all Christians may unite. We are sometimes reminded that the low state of the Congregational churches preceding the Great Awakening of 1740, and again preceding the Unitarian schism, was intimately connected, as cause with effect, with the holding and teaching of Arminian doctrine; yes, and with the holding and teaching of Calvinistic doctrine as well. But the cold, flat, nerveless Arminianism of some Congregational pastors in those days was not more like the warm, earnest, aggressive Arminianism of Methodism than the Calvinism of certain other pastors was like the Calvinism of Paul. Calling the mother-bird by her

generic name will not enable her to warm her porcelain nest-eggs into a callow brood. Not the warm conviction of Christian doctrine frankly preached, but the haughty and separatist way of promulgating dogma, was that which alienated the people from our ministry and churches. The truth of Calvinism should be a sword to pierce, and not an axe to hew, from their adherence to us, the hearts of the perishing multitudes.

Moreover, a certain lack of organism, or, if you please, of organization, for expressing and enforcing the power of our church life, was a weakness of Congregationalism during the century of which we now speak. Much love has run to waste for lack of channels to conserve and convey its blessing: much more has been wasted in dispute over the preparation of its own channels of communication. Whenever speech is heard urging the need of more organization, certain minds at once interpret the speech as signifying more *organized power*. What is really needed is more of *organized fellowship and labor:* these, when organized, constitute concrete and manifest and effective power.

To these and kindred weaknesses, which have thus far seemed more or less closely inherent in New-England Congregationalism, and which, in a measure, account for its failure to realize fully the true church polity, and for its slow self-propagation, we must add certain others of a somewhat different class.

Certain more distinctively moral blemishes in some of our prominent men, and in many of our churches, retarded the self-propagation of Congregationalism during the century from 1776 to 1876. Of these blemishes the most damaging in effect, and, it is to be feared, most selfish in motive, has been the large indifferentism so widely displayed. It should be taken for granted

that we can have no right to complain of the weakness of our polity until the manly strength of its adherents has been generously given to it. To make new machinery for doing the work which belongs only to men to accomplish, is plausible in scheme, but disappointing in result.

The very brief answer of Dr. Noyes[1] to the question, "Why has not Congregationalism proper occupied all the land?" — "It did not try," — does not contain the entire truth: it contains, however, the essential truth. For, as Dr. Post has declared,[2] self-diffusion is a necessity of Congregationalism, and its great means is "self-indoctrination, the interpenetration of our body with a more distinctive, appreciative, grateful self-consciousness." But the more prominent men in our ministry from 1750 to 1850 have been accused, and apparently by no means without justice, of taking little interest in the doctrine of the true Christian church, or in the Congregational way of constituting churches. Yet even this indifference of our more prominent leaders was scarcely so hurtful as the wide-spread indifference of Congregational laymen, shown at once on leaving New England for residence in other regions of this country. All the other churches, but especially the Presbyterian and Episcopalian, contain large numbers of the sons and daughters of this ancient mother. For this unfaithfulness, if unfaithfulness it is to be called, two reasons are usually assigned; or rather one reason, which is seen and described from two points of view. Congregationalists, it is sometimes said, are very wisely liberal with regard to church government: they believe that its form is a mere matter of expediency, and that

[1] See article in New-Englander, July, 1879, p. 510.

[2] Contributions to Ecclesiastical History of Connecticut, pp. 93, ff.

a man can of choice, without any abandonment of principle, be a member of a Congregational church in New England, and a member of a Presbyterian or an Episcopal church in New York or New Jersey. We Congregationalists, say others, are not sectarian enough; we must ourselves have the same rigid denominationalism which works so well with other church orders; we must train the members of our churches more strictly in the spirit and practice of denominationalism, or we shall continue to lose them. Let us, however, seek clear light upon this important matter. Congregationalism, strictly speaking, has lost her own sons and daughters, neither because she has been too wisely liberal nor because she has not been sectarian enough. And, if the disease has not been too much charity, the cure is *not* more sectarianism; but, if the disease has been too much indifference, the cure *is* more of principle. Were a lack of sectarian or denominational zeal the real reason of our losses, and were the remedy for these losses the increase of such zeal, we should have no right to apply the remedy, we should rather, by the law of Christ, be compelled to rejoice in such losses. But why cannot the disciples of Christ in general and the adherents of our church order in particular learn thoroughly these truths, — that indifferentism is selfishness or ignorance, and not charity, and that intelligent adherence to principles in the due order of their importance is not to be confounded with sectarian zeal?

Religious formalism is another of those more distinctively moral failings which must be held to be the partial causes of the slow propagation of our church order. The lack of warm and hearty religious life has taken, at times, the form of secret or open opposition to the spirit of revivalism. The spirit of revivalism is inti-

mately connected with the material principle of Congregationalism, and revivals of religion have been, to a large extent, the means divinely employed to maintain and increase the number of Congregational churches. The acknowledgment and use of this means is not, indeed, peculiar to any church order; but many of the most vigorous and successful leaders of revivalism in New England have been Congregational pastors. The re-actions of the churches from their periods of religious depression and defection have been into a period of revival. The "Great Awakening" of 1740 and the subsequent awakenings were religious re-actions against the cold formalism which had both its cause and its expression in the Half-way Covenant. The "little reviving," which led on to another "Great Awakening" after the war of the Revolution, was a spiritual re-action against the infidelity, immorality, and formalism which grew out of that war. As we have already had occasion to notice, it was the remarkable phenomena of these revivals which led Neander to solicit his pupil Uhden to write the history of New-England Congregationalism from a "psychological view." Revivals can, then, no more be deemed alien to our polity than can the supplement for their work which is found in Christian nurture, and which has been always in theory, and generally in practice, made essential by our polity.

Yet must it be confessed that these awakenings, which were re-actions against the formalism of a slumbering church, have themselves been made the occasions of great debate and oppugnancy, as well as no small amount of schism. As a body of churches, we have nearly always manifested far more of formalism than we are apt to think. Many of the most vigorous, indiscriminating, and unconscionable opponents of reviv-

alism have been Congregational pastors. Both during and after these seasons of religious awakening there has been far too little disposition in the New-England church polity to receive its blessings with thanksgiving, and to spend time and strength in improvement of them, rather than in debate over them. Congregationalists have been wont to look with suspicion upon the crass methods, the sudden and sweeping successes, the rather doubtful and debatable net results, of many of the revivals of Methodism. There is enough in the phenomena to justify the suspicion. But may we not also recognize the fault in ourselves, that by crass methods of opposing revivals, by sudden and sweeping denunciations of great successes, by doubt and debate, instead of thanksgiving over results, we have sometimes brought to the church of Christ, and to our own church order, even greater cause of suspicion? Many flickering lights which soon go out to leave a smell behind do not, indeed, adorn the candlestick of the Lord. But, when the "Old Lights" and the "New Lights" so sputter against each other that they cannot be kept alight in the same candlestick, it is surely not adorned withal. The most deeply seated and dangerous formalism does not consist in ritualistic observances. The haughtiness of formalism is no less displeasing in the sight of Heaven than are the excessses of revivalism: it is even more displeasing in the sight of the multitudes.

This incomplete estimate of the causes for the relative decline of Congregationalism would be made even more interesting and instructive, could it be compared with other estimates of the same causes which have been made in years long since past, when, indeed, the men of those years told the tale of their sorrows in the years then past to them. Especially interesting and instruc-

tive is the account given of the causes of the decline of Congregationalism by the synod of Boston, Sept. 10, 1679. The question before this synod had reference, indeed, rather to a decline in quality than in relative quantity of members. But certain answers to the question — those, for example, which recount merely such manifestations of evil as need themselves to be accounted for, or else lay great stress upon too much toleration of unimportant differences in opinion — exhibit the same unsatisfactoriness or excessive self-excuse with which we in our day are wont to meet a similar problem. Others, and these the majority of the answers rendered by this synod, duly assign the true and self-accusing account of the lamented decline. Doubtless the solemn covenant which they urged upon the churches, — a covenant "to reform heart and life, to walk before God in the house with a perfect heart, and to be pure from the sins of the times," — if it had been practised as it was pledged, would have checked this decline.

In 1705 we find another interesting indication of the special sorrows which Congregationalism had already endured through the neglect of her own children, in the quotation from Isa. li. 18, placed by Rev. John Wise upon the front leaf of his "Vindication of the Government of New-England Churches:" "There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she hath brought forth; neither is there any that taketh her by the hand of all the sons that she hath brought up." A right noble grip upon the hand of his forlorn mother is that professed by this Ispwich pastor. But, as is usual in all such cases, the outreaching of this hand for helping was regarded by some as though it were a most damaging blow.

In conclusion, let the inquiry be raised for a brief answer, How may the self-propagation of a true church polity be rendered more efficient? In reply I ask you to supplement with your own thought the following elements of an answer: —

1. The true church polity must be propagated as a matter of conviction and of adherence to principles. In as far as Congregationalism is such a polity, it must be thus propagated. The motive of expediency or of sectarian zeal is not a sufficient, trustworthy, and abiding motive. As a sect or an expedient, Congregationalism is not worthy of propagating at all. The government of Christ's churches is not a matter left to expediency. The principles of church government are to be understood as *principles*, valued as *principles*, propagated as *principles*.

2. We must educate our ministry, and, through the ministry, all the members of our churches, in the knowledge and love of these principles. Congregational ministers should be Congregationalists, if at all, then, from principle. To aid toward this end is this Lectureship, as I suppose, constituted and perpetually to be employed. Let the usefulness of this present Course of Lectures be to convince at least a few Congregational ministers that their church order is worthy of deepest researches, most ardent love, most efficient and self-sacrificing labors. The members of Congregational churches should be trained to intelligent convictions regarding the spiritual worthiness of this their church order. This is the only possible substitute for a sectarian zeal which is intolerable to our church order, and impossible to obtain from its members.

3. Greater pains should be taken to avoid losing so large numbers of our own sons and daughters. The

members of our congregations, on changing residence, should be definitely commended and directed to Congregational churches in their new places of residence. They should not go from their old homes to their new ones under the impression that it is matter of indifference what their church connections may become. They should even be kindly remonstrated with for ill-considered changes.

4. A more hearty, unfeigned, and effective communion of churches should confirm those which are feeble, lest our self-propagation be diminished by their passing from the face of the earth. This office of the communion of churches in the self-propagation of Congregationalism has already been sufficiently considered.

5. The specific means for a wise multiplication of churches of this order in our own land should be more vigorously used and thriftily supported. Among such means are the American Home Missionary Society, the American Missionary Association, and the Congregational Union.

6. The missionary work of the churches in foreign lands should be recognized as a work of self-propagation. To this most important of all the considerations now before us, we return in the next Lecture.

7. All appropriate means for promoting and expressing a real unity in a manifest oneness of organization are in place for the purposes of self-propagation. Only must we always remember that the result of enforced oneness is schism, and that the organization needed is not organized power other than the power which is in organized fellowship and organized work. On the other hand, they must cease provoking schism who would divide our churches upon irrelevant issues, or drive them together into a semblance of denominational compact.

8. Finally, we must give more of our manhood to the study of these principles and to their propagation in the concrete form of New-Testament churches; we must do this in the conviction that the true church polity is worthy of study and labors, to the end that it may prevail throughout Christendom. To the complaint, so hackneyed, so disagreeable, so much trumpeted within our own lines, so true, that Congregationalism has shown a great lack of definiteness, pith, grip, and skill in meeting emergencies, I make the following reply. Congregationalism has indeed shown a certain great and lamentable lack. It has exhibited an obvious need of improvement. The need is not, however, one of new principles. It is not pre-eminently the need of many new ways of applying the old principles. Doubtless we are called from time to time to venture upon new expedients as new emergencies arise: this venture we may freely and bravely make. But *the great and permanent need of our polity is the need of Christian manhood in our ministry and in our laity, cultivated and brought to bear upon the working of our polity.* The type of manhood in our church order has been superior rather than inferior; *but it has not been given to the churches under the forms instituted by Congregationalism.* We need our Christian manhood put into our polity. We need that the highest wisdom, skill, courage, kindness, and devotion should be consecrated to and used in the administration of our church order.

A machine will run of itself until its communicated force is exhausted. If it needs drivers, a few men will drive machinery enough to do the work of scores of other men. But Congregationalism is not an ecclesiastical machine. An organism, however, must grow in every part and by the co-ordinated motion of all its con-

stituent vital particles. Vital particles in our organism are all our sons and daughters. If the ministers and laymen of Congregational churches will give generously of their manhood, their time, their thought, their money, their faithful and kindly painstaking, to the cause of a true church polity, its one only alarming and comprehensive need will be met. But if they so spend, lavish, and squander upon other causes, or so hoard for them their Christian manhood, that little or none can be given to such a polity, will it be a cause for wonder that the polity languishes toward death? In the event of continuing such neglect, one of two issues will surely result: either — because the multitudes refrain from her conventions, conferences, councils, and benevolent boards — her work of self-propagation will fall into the hands of the willing few, or it will wholly cease. When the few, the ready clerical or lay manipulators, assume control, Congregationalism will be no longer a true church polity, although, perhaps, continuing to bear a once honored name: it will become a new ecclesiastical denomination among the others which now exist. It will be an organization, another sect, and it may for a time work well; but it will be reserved for others to establish yet again a principled church polity. In the event of universal neglect, however, the indwelling life of an order bearing the name Congregational will more and more retreat upon its centres, only at the last wholly to disappear. But, should that which has been called Congregationalism cease to propagate itself according to recognizable ancient forms, there would still arise a larger and larger number of New-Testament churches upon the earth. For these principles will not die: they will rather live in concrete forms. We do not, then, despair of the self-propagation of the true church polity

by the multiplication of Congregational churches in their forms of institution and communion essentially the same as the so-called Congregational churches in this country have thus far always been. For to despair of the propagation of Congregationalism — meaning by this the growth of New-Testament principles of church order as embodied in particular visible churches — would be to despair of a progressive, free, and abiding organization of the Christian Church itself.

LECTURE XI.

CONGREGATIONALISM AND FOREIGN MISSIONS.

ARISTOTLE, and the schoolmen in their following of this great master, distinguished all causes as either efficient, material, formal, or final; and among these Aristotle gave the pre-eminence to the final cause. The most important question, then, which can be asked concerning any material or spiritual structure, is the question as to τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα, — the question not simply how or why, but *what for?* The pre-eminence of this question is thought to be especially manifest in the case of such more complex and highly organized social and spiritual structures as is the Christian Church. The question after the final cause of the particular visible church ought, therefore, to excite the distinctive interest of Congregationalists; for the doctrine of the particular visible church is a specialty with Congregationalists. Having learned by whom, and out of what material, and by the action of what subordinate forces, a Christian church should be instituted and governed, we are ready the more eagerly to ask, For what great end, or purpose, is it thus instituted and governed? The answer to this question is not, for the diligent inquirer, either far to seek or difficult to find. We may readily recognize and emphasize a certain principle as organific in the formation and control of each particular visible Congregational

church. Every such church is organized for some end: it is the idea of that end which rightly organizes it as a church. It is the final purpose which gives the laws of adjustment and proportion to all the different members and organs of a church body politic, and which distributes and energizes the functions of those organs.

What is, then, the organific purpose, the final cause, of every true Christian Church? It is the spread of the kingdom of God upon the earth. In order that it may the better serve as means to this end, it is organized as a church. To this end it exists, and is a true church of Jesus Christ. This one final cause is, however, twofold: it includes the two elements of edification and evangelism. Every particular visible church exists in order that it may build its own members up into Christ: a part of its final purpose is to make itself a wiser, more righteous, holy, and blessed church. But every particular visible church also exists in order that it may make other men Christians: a part of its final purpose is to do its part in winning the world to Christ. There is thus given both an element intensive and an element extensive in the complete final purpose of the church; and every particular congregation of believers holds its right to existence, its *ratio essendi*, in the twofold intent to edify its own members and to evangelize the world.

These two elements of the one great final cause necessarily co-exist, and wax or wane in cogency together. But we may truthfully claim that the element of evangelism is, both in the order of time and in that of logic, prior to the element of church edification. The gospel must be preached, and men converted, before those same men can enter into mutual covenant to help each other in the conversation and life of the gospel.

The missionary will, in some sort, take precedence of the pastor, until the whole world is gathered unto Christ. Our Lord himself in person commanded his disciples to go and disciple all the nations, and gave them instruction as to the spirit and equipment for their missionary journey: he did this in person before he in the Spirit organized and equipped with officers the local church. And we read concerning the distribution of those charisms which are all of them, even including those of the inspired authors of Scripture and founders of New-Testament churches, given for the sake of the entire community of believers, "First apostles, second prophets, third teachers," or, "Some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." But apostles and evangelists are missionaries rather than pastors; and prophets are needed quite as much for the work of evangelizing the world as for the edifying of the church.

In view of the pre-eminence given by the true church polity to the exclusive rulership of Jesus Christ, and to the responsibility for self-movement and self-control of the particular churches, it seems indeed strange that the missionary element of the final cause of every church has been in our definitions and discussions so little recognized. A nobler setting-forth of the nature of a particular visible church than that given by Rev. John Davenport (already alluded to) it would be difficult to find. The Aristotelian division of causes seems to have shaped the division of Davenport's treatise.[1] The efficient cause of a particular visible church is Christ himself: the material cause is those persons who believe on and confess Christ: the formal cause is the

[1] The Power of Congregational Churches Asserted and Vindicated, chaps. i.-iii.

mutual covenanting of these believers. But why does not Davenport go on with equal clearness to declare what is the final cause of the particular church? The power and compass, the institution and officers, of the church, are all by this author faithfully described. But the question, *To what end or final cause* has Christ (the efficient cause) so bound the members (the material cause) together by their mutual covenanting (the formal cause)? is not even plainly proposed. The question is, indeed, to some extent, indirectly answered; the members of the church are spoken of as the instruments of Christ's work; the work of the Church is alluded to, and its ends partially stated. But this great thought — the very constitution of each church exists in order that it may as a church act in converting all the world into the church — is nowhere distinctly brought forth. The power of the keys is vindicated for the Congregational church; but it is not clearly made manifest that this power of the keys can fitly belong to, and duly be exercised by, only a missionary church.

The same lack of completeness in their conception of a church is almost universal with our writers. They do not give clear recognition to the pre-eminence of that twofold final cause which constitutes an organific principle in the existence of every particular church. Even that eminently thorough and thoughtful writer, Rev. John Owen, not unfrequently disappoints us in this same regard. We seem at times, while reading his heavy pages, to be in the nearest proximity to a full recognition of the missionary power and missionary obligation of a particular visible church. One of his writings[1] contains a very tender and scriptural discus-

[1] Eshcol: a Cluster of the Fruit of Canaan. Works, vol. xiii.

sion of all the mutual duties of Christians in church-fellowship; another[1] discusses "the means to be used by the people of God (distinct from the church officers) for the increasing of divine knowledge in themselves and others." But the stirring of one another to missionary zeal is not treated among these mutual duties: the use of lay-evangelization does not appear among the means for increasing divine knowledge which are permitted to the laity. In his argument that Congregational churches are indeed suited to the ends of Christ,[2] we might certainly expect to see some mention of the relation which exists between a particular church Congregationally organized, and that great end of the Saviour of mankind, which is the redemption of the world. Indeed, at one point in this argument[3] we seem to come squarely upon a recognition of this truth. "Another end" of the institution of the church-state is declared to be, that the church might be "the principal outward means to support, preserve, publish, declare, and propagate the doctrine or truth of the gospel." But in the consideration of this end the author simply shows how the Congregational system of church order is best adapted to preserve itself from heresies, and to conform itself to every form of righteous earthly government.

Those noteworthy definitions of a church in which the writers on Congregationalism abound, quite uniformly emphasize the use of the church to the end of its own edifying; but rarely do they mention its relation to the end of converting the world. "To worship the Lord, and to edifie one another in all his holy

[1] The Duty of Pastors and People Distinguished. Ibid., vol. xiii.
[2] Inquiry concerning Evangelical Churches. Ibid., vol. xv.
[3] Works, xv. p. 306.

ordinances,"[1] is apparently regarded by them all as the sole final purpose of a Congregational church. "For the public worship of God, and the mutual edification one of another, in the fellowship of the Lord Jesus," is the statement proposed by our Platform of the end of such a church. To this hour the accepted Congregational definitions of a particular visible church of Christ are lamentably deficient in clear recognition of that very end for which Christ called all the churches into being, and gave them the law of their life. That every congregation of true believers should be organized upon the basis of distinct recognition in its church covenant of this its great final cause and obligation in the conversion of the world, I do not hesitate to assert. That a Congregational council should, before organizing in fellowship any new church, insist upon proofs of this recognition, is much more important than that it should require an extended dogmatic statement of belief.

It would, however, be an inexcusable blunder to imply that our church order has been, either absolutely, or relatively to others, remiss in practical recognition of the divine obligation to make every local church a centre of missionary zeal and missionary work. Indeed, Uhden notes[2] these two special characteristics of the missionary enterprise of the New-England churches: (1) The early stage of their existence (indeed, only a few years after their own founding) at which it began to flourish; and (2) That the race which they attempted to evangelize was one recognized as foreign, and in civilization decidedly below themselves.

It is not my purpose to go beyond the mention of a few facts in illustration of this forwardness of the

[1] See Cotton's Doctrine of the Church and its Government.

[2] See New-England Theocracy, p. 81.

New-England Congregational churches in missionary enterprise.[1] The purposes of the fathers in coming to America encompassed this great final purpose of the Christian Church. Among the reasons which urged them to removal from Leyden we find enumerated: "Lastly (and which was not least), a great hope & inward zeall they had of laying some good foundation, or at least to make some way thereunto, for ye propagating & advancing ye gospell of ye kingdom of Christ in those remote parts of ye world; yea, though they should be but even as stepping-stones unto others for ye performing of so great a work."[2] Cotton Mather tells us[3] that Higginson, when setting sail from the Isle of Wight, and bidding farewell to England, exclaimed, "We go to practise the positive part of church reformation, and propagate the gospel in America." The charter of Massachusetts made it the duty of the settlers "to win and incite the natives of that country to the knowledge and obedience of the only true God and Saviour of mankind." The establishment of an Indian college for the education of a native ministry followed not long after the establishment of Harvard itself. At the outbreak of the war with King Philip, in 1674, notable advances in evangelizing these savage tribes had already been made. Three villages of praying Indians could be counted, with an aggregate population of between four thousand and five thousand souls.[4]

[1] Fuller statements of this truth and of the corresponding facts of history may be found in these, among other writings: Dexter, Congregationalism, pp. 228, 340; Historical Sketch, etc., pp. 46, 51, 79, 229; article of Dr. Cushing, Congregational Quarterly, October, 1876; article of Dr. Leonard Bacon, in New-Englander, August, 1860.

[2] Bradford's Plymouth Plantation, p. 24.

[3] Magnalia, Book III. 1 § 11, f.

[4] See Clark's Historical Sketch of the Congregational Churches of Massachusetts, p. 78, f.

It was the early missions of the New-England churches to the Indians which called into being the oldest missionary board in Great Britain: this board was at first known as the "Society for Propagating the Gospel among the Indians in North America." The attempts of Congregationalism at home missions began as early in this country as 1642, when three Congregational pastors were "spared" to go to the "Upper New Farms" of Virginia.

From the middle of the seventeenth until toward the close of the eighteenth century, little of genuine missionary zeal appears in the sermons and writings of New-England Congregational pastors, little of genuine missionary work was attempted by the churches. Excessive controversy over theological issues, excessive pressure of civil and military affairs, and great decline in the spiritual life of the churches, caused an arrested development of missionary zeal and work. But an occasional voice is heard from the pulpit, which has the true evangelistic ring, like that, for instance, of Rev. Ebenezer Gay, who declares, "Commendable is the love they discover to souls, who preach the gospel in those places of the land where it was little known, and as little is done for the support of it. . . . That such ministers do as well, who, overlooking those which are most destitute of the gospel, strive to preach it only or chiefly in places where there are fixed and faithful pastors, remains still to be proved by them." [1]

The first formal missionary organization in Massachusetts was the Congregational Missionary Society in the counties of Berkshire and Columbia, established in 1798. On the 28th of May, 1799, the Massachusetts

[1] Words found in a Convention Sermon preached at Boston, 1746; volume in the Library of Maine Historical Society.

Missionary Society was organized. This organization was in the broadest sense a *missionary* society; its original object being "to diffuse the knowledge of the gospel among the heathens as well as other people in the remote parts of our country, where Christ is seldom or never preached." In 1774 the first notice of missions to the new settlements appears on the records of the General Association of Connecticut. In 1800 their first missionary, the Rev. David Bacon, was sent forth by this organization. At the beginning of this century the Connecticut Missionary Society took its annual contribution in the month of May, from "all the congregations, by virtue of a brief from the Governor, and in conformity with a legislative order."[1] The history of the origin and successes of the American Board is too well known to need rehearsal here.

Even this brief survey of the history of our missionary enterprises as Congregational churches may serve to represent to our minds the following important truths: —

The thrift and intensity of missionary zeal are very closely related to a true and complete doctrine of the church. The fact that the clearest and most comprehensive statements extant of the nature and office of the church contain so meagre a recognition of the true final cause of the church, and the fact that the church life of our order has thus far been so meagrely fruitful in missionary work, are connected and correlated facts. The Church of Jesus Christ has, neither in doctrine nor in practical activities, fully recognized the end for which it is constituted as a church by the act of Jesus Christ. Churches must be made of disciples: churches cannot, therefore, be made unless disciples are

[1] See Contributions to Ecclesiastical History of Conn., pp. 56, ff.

made. The primal word of command which constitutes the churches is the order, Go and disciple all the nations. It is by making disciples that we are able to make churches. The doctrine of the church must, then, include the final cause of the church in its element of evangelism: this doctrine must penetrate and energize the entire life of the church. The doctrine of the self-propagation of the gospel is an integral part of the doctrine of the gospel: the spirit of propagandism is an inseparable and vital element in the life of the gospel.

We need not, therefore, be surprised to find that the rise and fall of religious life in the particular churches gives conditions to the increase or diminution of their interest in missions. The early life of the New-England churches was vigorous and aggressive: their interest in the propagation of the gospel among the surrounding Indians was correspondingly large. The tone of this life was afterwards weakened and lowered. The missions among the Indians ceased. Common causes tended, indeed, to depress both the churches and the missions; but the reverse is true, that the churches and the missions were depressed as parts of a common cause. The revival of religious life in New England, which marked the years about 1740, produced a new interest in the missions among the Indians: this new interest showed itself in the self-denying toils of Brainerd.

We note, also, that *the genuine missionary spirit exhibits the characteristic desire to bring the gospel to the most destitute and neglected.* It is this spirit which mingles in inextricable but blessed confusion the history of our home and foreign missions. When John Eliot of Roxbury preached to the Indians on Nonantum Hill in Newton, or at the Neponset River in Dorchester, was

he a home, or a foreign missionary? He was not far from home in his native land; but he brought the news of salvation to the neglected and the destitute. He was a missionary: the further distinction is not essential to our cause. It is this lack of appreciation for the superior privilege which they have who carry the gospel to the destitute, whether in the New-England village, or on the frontier, or in Central Africa, which has hitherto cramped and weakened both our home and foreign enterprises. In the gospel order, both the chronological and the logical, the missionary has a certain marked superiority to the pastor. No minister can aspire to the highest places in the Church of Jesus Christ who does not become a missionary, who does not do, that is to say, the work of the apostle and the evangelist in going forth with the message of salvation to the destitute. The essential thing is not in the distance to which he goes. He may cross the river which runs through his town, or cross two oceans, to reach those destitute. Every pastor should be also a missionary; every layman as well.

We observe with regret, moreover, that the true estimate of the relations which exist between our Congregational principles and the work of missions, as well as the final and satisfactory adjustment of those principles to that work, have as yet never been made. We have enjoyed, as Congregational churches, for more than a half-century, a marked revival of our interest in foreign missions: we have in the mean time rejoiced over notable successes in this missionary work. And yet this length of time, with its experience of successes, has only answered, in a very fragmentary and partial way, some of the most important and pressing questions. Among such we may enumerate the following:

How far do we act distinctively as *Congregationalists* in our foreign missionary work? How far are we to undertake this work as a matter of self-propagation, as a work, that is, of multiplying in the world the number of Congregational churches? How far are Congregational missionaries to teach, and to have embodied in the churches of their converts, a true doctrine of the church, as well as other true doctrines? How far may we energize and utilize our peculiar church order for a peculiarly successful work of foreign missions? Is there, indeed, any thing in our church order which may insure for us such peculiar success? How shall these principles of the true church polity better operate, and how far be relied upon, to excite enthusiasm for this work in the particular churches of our own land? How shall these particular churches be efficiently united in this work? I stop in my questioning at this point, not because there are no more interesting questions which I could raise, but because I have already raised so many more than I can answer. Indeed, I must disclaim at once any seeming assumption of ability to answer a single one of the questions raised above. The purpose of this Lecture will be accomplished, if only it serve to place them before your minds, and if it somewhat stimulate some minds to attempt their better answer.

One of the most interesting theoretical questions which a Congregationalist can ask himself is this one, What are the relations of the principles of a true church polity to the missionary work of the churches? More interesting and important, for instance, than any new theory of councils, or associations, or consociations, as means of giving a formal expression to the communion of churches, is this question, How shall the commun-

ion of churches be made availing in the spread of the gospel among the destitute? This general question concerning the relations of our church order to the missionary work of the churches we shall now briefly consider under three heads. These heads are, (1) The relation of the individual member of a Congregational church to the work of missions, (2) The relation of the particular visible church to this work, and (3) The relation of the communion of sister Congregational churches to the same work. The view which the Congregational polity must take of each one of these three topics is dependent upon the two fundamental principles of that polity. The formal principle requires that we should look to the missionary work of the apostles and the New-Testament churches as containing the ideas, and embodying the principles, which must control our missionary work. It requires us to study the New Testament "in order that," as Dr. J. P. Thompson has said,[1] "with the elements and causes of the early triumphs of Christianity distinctly in view, we may apply to the present whatever in those early methods was of the nature of a permanent principle." To this conclusion, necessary on theoretical grounds, Dr. Anderson declares[2] that experience also leads. But the material principle of Congregationalism requires that every individual believer and every local congregation of believers shall be a hearth of heat and a source of light, without assignable limits and without conventional restraints.

The principles of Congregationalism lay an immense emphasis upon the duty and power of the individual believer in the propagation of the gospel among the destitute. Under the purest and most strenuous working of these principles, every converted soul is to be

[1] Article in New-Englander, 1860, p. 946. [2] Foreign Missions, p. 29, f.

regarded as a self-appointed and self-controlled missionary or propagator of the gospel of Jesus Christ; because every such soul is by his conversion made the bondman for such service of his Lord. To him as one who has subjected himself totally to the will of a divine Master,[1] and who is, therefore, in respect to this obedience, independent of the will, concurrent or adverse, of any individual in the whole universe of created souls, the command of this Master is made known. The terms of his allegiance allow of no hesitation: they do not permit that he shall take counsel of others to discover whether they purpose to unite with him in obedience to this command. Each disciple of the Lord, were he the only disciple, would be as much bound to the effort to bring this message to the destitute, as he can now possibly be; and no means of co-operation can release any disciple from this perpetual and perpetually obligatory bond.

It is the missionary spirit which itself organizes all means of missionary work. This spirit belongs to the believer as such; and New-Testament history shows us, in veritable and efficient exercise, the power and duty of the individual believer in propagating the gospel of Christ. The converted soul is the first missionary society. There is, indeed, a *society*, if there be only one such soul; for there is a holy communion of spirit and unity of endeavor between that one soul and its risen Lord. The missionary work of the early Christians began before any formal union of churches occurred, and even before the formation of more than a single church. This work brought into being the material out of which the subsequent churches were formed. The self-propagation of Christianity was by the preaching of those who

[1] See the word δοῦλος in Grimm's Lexicon of the New Testament.

had become Christians, irrespective of their rank, or condition of society, and without tarrying for any consecration of an ordaining prayer, or laying-on of hands. The apostles themselves were primarily simple preachers of the gospel to the destitute; and all the other activities, offices, and products of the apostolate, are secondary to this. As founders and guides of churches, as writers of Sacred Scripture, and authoritative teachers of permanent Christian doctrine, they act out of the further requirements which the Spirit of Christ made in order chiefly to render effective their obedience to the command of Jesus, Go and disciple all the nations. To consider them as carrying alone the burden of this command, or as having the monopoly of this work, or as doing the work belonging to them in a merely official and perfunctory way, is totally and fatally to misapprehend the planting of Christianity in the history of the race. Individual Christians, scattered by the wind of persecution, were the seed-bearers of the divine Word. They went not simply as fugitives, but also as witnesses. In not a few places they doubtless preceded the apostles themselves.

The records of the first centuries of the Christian Church show us the wonderful triumph of Christianity through the spontaneous work of individual believers. Tertullian could boast, with a large measure of truthfulness, although with whatever excusable exaggeration, "We are a people of yesterday, and yet we have filled every place belonging to you, — cities, islands, castles, towns, assemblies, your very camp, your tribes, companies, palace, senate, forum." But the possibility of the boast was largely due to the fact, that, as Celsus jeeringly states, "wool-workers, cobblers, leather-dressers, the most illiterate and vulgar of mankind, were zealous

preachers of the gospel, and addressed themselves, particularly in the outset, to women and children." Indeed, when we reckon as coming in part under this head, the work of the Apostle Paul (and under this head that work certainly in part belongs), we must consider the spontaneous and self-controlled proclamation of the gospel by the individual believer as the chief means for the spread of Christianity in the early days of the church. Not to the church, not to the clergy, but to the individual believer, was committed the stress of the first missionary work.

Certain institutions divinely prepared, and certain universally prevalent customs divinely used, gave, however, to this spontaneous and unorganized method of propagating the gospel, an efficiency which it is now apparently impossible to secure.[1] The Roman Empire, the Greek language, and the Jewish synagogue are the institutions to which I refer. These institutions themselves guaranteed a certain security, ease, efficiency, and unity to this unorganized work of evangelizing the world. The customs of commercial and social life made the Christian merchant a missionary from place to place, and facilitated, by the usages of hospitable and leisurely living, the verbal communication of the message from home to home, and from mouth to mouth. It appears, that although we have, in some respects, gained facilities for propagating the gospel by the spontaneous and unorganized activity of individual believers who send the message from land to land, and from centre to circumference about the whole earth, in other important respects we have decidedly lost. Shall we, then, abandon the doctrine that the propagation of

[1] See, regarding these truths, the article of Dr. Thompson, New-Englander, November, 1860.

the gospel, abroad as well as at home, is not a matter of *clerical function*, but of *individual Christian duty and power?* This doctrine we cannot abandon, for it is inherent both in the history of the New Testament and in the principles of our church order. Our modern missions, as well as the earlier missions, must recognize a "sanctified individualism:" they must enforce the duty of every individual Christian to take part in evangelizing the world. Nor are we without hope, that in accordance with this principle, while our organizations for missionary enterprise grow more numerous and massive and effective, the work distinctive of individual spontaneity and individual peculiarities will grow more pervasive, alert, and also effective. The Church will need all arms of her service, if she is to win the field.

It is a noteworthy fact that the religion into conflict with which, upon Oriental grounds, our Christianity is coming more and more, wins its greatest successes by acknowledgment and use of this same principle. The accounts concerning the growth and prospects of Mohammedanism are indeed conflicting. Probably the truth is, that this religion is in one place waning when in another it may be rapidly acquiring numbers and power. Dr. J. von Döllinger declares on the authority of Garcin de Tassy, than whom it would be difficult to find one more trustworthy, that the Arabian religion is to-day showing "strong expansive force," and "is extending itself now almost as rapidly and as vigorously by the peaceful methods of persuasion as formerly by the sword." "In Africa it advances like a torrent: whole tribes in the interior, who yesterday were idolaters or fetich-worshippers, are to-day believers in the Koran." The Queen of England is to-day the "greatest

[1] Article in the Contemporary Review, June, 1879.

sovereign of Mahometan peoples in the world:" she reigns over fifty million, while only twenty-one million are under the Turkish Sultan. In Tonkin there are fifty thousand of them. The whole population of Java, with its nearly eight million, "have now for the first time, under the Dutch Government, become Mahometan." If, then, we have been wont to account for the spread of Mohammedanism by its use of the sword,—disregarding the pertinent question of Carlyle, What gave Mohammedanism its sword?—we can be satisfied with the shallow reason no longer. One important reason for these rapid conquests, as this reason is given by the writer just quoted, should press a pungent inquiry to the heart of the Christian world. Islam has a great advantage over the Christian churches, declares Dr. Döllinger, "from its knowing nothing of the sharp distinction between clergy and laity which is so especially marked in the Roman-Catholic Church; so that every Moslem feels bound to take part in the conversion of unbelievers, while Christians are accustomed to treat mission-work as a specialty of the clergy." We need, in view of such a statement from so high an authority, to emphasize anew the truth that it is contrary to the principles of *our* church order "to treat mission-work as a specialty of the clergy." As denying the class functions and obligations of the clergy, our church order has a special aptitude for evangelizing the world.

Notable results have been reached in the modern mission-work of Congregationalism by emphasizing the principle of a "sanctified individualism." It should never be tolerated in thought that reliance can be placed primarily upon keeping certain machinery in fair running order as equivalent to evangelizing the world. It was the movement of the Holy Spirit as a missionary

spirit in individual souls which preceded and led to the instituting of our principal means for foreign missionary work. In 1810 four young laymen, members of Andover Theological Seminary, devoted themselves to carrying the message of salvation to the destitute in foreign lands. These souls gave themselves. The institution of the American Board of Foreign Missions resulted from the devout intent to sustain these souls in the execution of their inspired purpose. The spirit of self-devotion in these individual souls organized that formal call of this board for workmen, which annually comes to the students of this seminary, and which urges the same self-devotement. The successes of the American Board have constantly emphasized this principle: these successes have been gained through the work of men who did no merely perfunctory work. The missionaries have gone, not as officers of *the church*, but as witnesses sent by the churches for preaching Christ to the destitute. That view of church polity which finds no place for the evangelist as the commissioner of Jesus, despatched by his brethren, and blessed as he is sent forth to preach the gospel wherever hearers can be found, is opposed to the genius of our church order.[1] Every missionary goes forth as an individual soul responding in this form of response to the universal divine command. Missionaries go not as officers of the church, but to make churches, and to see that officers are set over them. The converts made are at once themselves to be made evangelists according to the same divine command. Native ministers, like the Karen Quala, who, in less than three years, gathered thirty churches, with twenty-one hundred and twenty-seven

[1] See, however, the work of Owen, entitled On the Spirit, vol. iv. p. 446, f.

members — young gentlemen, how far back must you and I not stand when that poor Karen is told "Welcome" and "Well done" by his Lord? — like the Shanar of whom Rev. John Thomas speaks, like Bartimeus the blind preacher of the Sandwich Islands, — native ministers like these illustrate the honor which the Spirit puts upon a "sanctified individualism."[1] It was as lone souls, evangelists, missionaries, apostles taken from the lowest grades of heathen life, and not as officers of the church, that these men accomplished their great work.

That the duty and power of the individual believer may be made of vastly more avail in the propagating of the gospel there is no room for reasonable doubt. The time is promised, when, in the going of many to and fro, they that move shall carry the light and love of Christ with them wherever they go. We indicate with some confidence, and yet with becoming diffidence, several of those special applications of this principle to our missionary work which may perhaps earliest be secured.

We must emphasize anew the dignity and importance of the evangelist, — the truest successor of the apostles known to our modern methods of doing Christian work. We have exalted our doctrine of the officer of the local church at the expense of our doctrine concerning the messenger sent by the churches, or self-commissioned, to carry the gospel to the destitute. There has been no little wrangling as to the amount of dignity and authority which belong to the pastors of churches, to the clergy, as a class and by virtue of their office. We need relatively to exalt the dignity and authority of the man, who, with election to no other office than that of serving needy souls by the proclamation of the gospel, goes to the remoter and darker regions of the earth. We

[1] See Dr. Anderson's Foreign Missions, pp. 131, ff.

have been careful to guard with rules the ordination of evangelists. We have made it very difficult at times to tell just what forms of ceremony must be gone through in order to secure for the missionary the blessing of clerical hands upon his missionary work. We may well consider whether the time is not coming when the pastor of the local church will think he needs a blessing from the hands of some modern apostle. The apostolate is perpetuated in the evangelistic and missionary service of the church more nearly than in any other form. Missionaries and evangelists are the only servants of Christ who are to be placed next apostles. Worthy John Owen contends that the office of evangelist was extraordinary, and has ceased to be needed by the church; this, although he defines the work of the evangelist in the first and third of its three heads as being, "to preach the gospel in all places and unto all persons as they had occasion," and "the settling and completing of those churches whose foundations were laid by the apostles." If this office has indeed ceased, it is because the Church of Christ has ceased to be a truly Christian Church. Let those who hear my voice remember this truth, that when the providence of God, who by his Spirit distributes the positions and works of his kingdom, or the secret choice of the soul which is recognized in conscience as approved or condemned by that Spirit, divides you into pastors and missionaries, the former are assigned to the inferior, the latter to the superior, dignities and opportunities in the Church of Christ. Wherefore covet earnestly the best gifts, but in any event forget not the eminently excellent way.

It follows, from what has already been said, that the foreign missionary has, in certain important respects, an essentially apostolic authority and position toward the

converts made, and the churches founded, on foreign missionary ground. He is not to become the chosen officer of any of those particular visible churches: he is not the acknowledged lord-bishop of any of those souls. But, having begotten them in the gospel, shall he cease to have the interest and care of a father over them? The theory of our church order insists, indeed, upon the autonomy of the local church and upon the self-control of the individual; this autonomy and self-control being under the exclusive rulership of Jesus Christ, who reveals his will in the Scriptures, and by his Spirit in the hearts of his followers. According to this theory, the only personal authority known to the churches is the delegated authority belonging to the chosen officers of the particular church. Does this theory admit of any modification, so as to make a distinction between churches differently circumstanced, and amongst different individual souls? May exceptional relations give an exceptional though still informal authority to others than their chosen officers? Experience has made it quite clear, at any rate, that our foreign missionary work must be, in its control over the churches, in some respects different from the work of keeping alive the local churches in New England, or even of propagating autonomous churches in our own West. We believe that the New-Testament principles provide for this modification without nullifying the recognized forms of official relations belonging to our church order. This provision is made in the fact that he who has spoken the first message with divine authority has the same authority to secure the fruits of his message. The modern missionary, acting alone, if it must be, or in consultation with his brethren on the same field, if it can be, has essentially the same authority over the

churches he has planted, that belonged to the Apostle Paul. If these churches go astray with their pastors, he is bound to rebuke both churches and pastors: he has authority, by all means which an apostle would use, to bring them back again to the right path. To act gingerly in these matters would show a foolish regard for formalism: not to be meek, patient, and loving, as well as brave and zealous, would be unapostolic. The truth that the missionary and evangelist bring the gospel to the destitute, then organize churches out of their converts, and then guard the purity in doctrine and life of those churches, *with all the authority of the apostles*, so far as essential characteristics and extent of application suited to the case are concerned, is a truth to be recognized in our foreign missionary enterprise. The New Testament ascribes a certain formal and official, but delegated, authority, to the elders or bishops of the local churches. It also ascribes a certain informal and undelegated, but well recognized, authority, to the founders of those churches. This latter kind of authority did not belong to the apostles on the ground of their differences from other founders of new churches, but rather on the ground of their likeness with them. The recognition of this authority is one form of putting honor upon the principle of sanctified individualism.

Nor need we despair of seeing again the time when the unorganized efforts of individual spontaneity will bring forth astonishing results. Who can measure the influence which would be exerted to evangelize heathenism, if the officers and common sailors upon the ships of Christendom were doing the work done by these classes in New-Testament times? Rum, opium, slaves, foul disease, and habits of violence and lust, have been propagated by the commerce of modern Christendom.

What if the gospel were with like diligence propagated by those who go upon the seas under Christian flags? The spirit of God, reviving in the church of this day the movements of a spontaneous and individual kind for the self-propagation of the gospel, would quickly outdo all the work of organizations. The wealth of the wealthy, the learning of the educated, the travel of explorers, the trade of merchants, must all be more and more appropriated and used to send through all the channels of most familiar and informal intercourse the influences of the religion of Christ. Self-sent, and at their own charges, will still greater numbers carry the gospel throughout the entire world.

And further: in making use of this principle of sanctified individualism, every convert upon heathen ground must be so converted and trained as to be himself a self-supporting centre of evangelism. Men will more and more frequently arise from the lowest and most central points of heathenism, who, like Quala and Bartimeus, will, in their influence over their own nations and tribes, far surpass any men of foreign birth. Concerning all these the remark of Dr. Anderson will hold true:[1] "It is a fundamental principle that the missionary goes on his mission in the discharge of his own personal duty, not as a servant of the churches, and not as a servant of the missionary society." He goes, that is, as a converted soul, and in response to the command of Christ. I will only add he goes as went the apostles, — with apostolic dignity in the estimate of all believers, and with apostolic authority toward the converts and churches given him by Christ. This is the truest form of perpetuating the apostolate; and in this form of its perpetuation every individual believer is invited to

[1] Foreign Missions, p. 145.

consider whether he shall not become a successor of the apostles.

We now consider, in the second place, the relations of the particular visible church to the work of foreign missions. We must admit that a certain relative weakness and unsatisfactoriness attach themselves to all merely individual enterprises in the Church of Christ. Indeed, strictly speaking, there can be no such thing as a merely individual missionary enterprise. If we suppose the only believer upon the face of the earth to set out upon a missionary journey in obedience to the command of Christ, his very first success in making a convert would destroy the isolation of his individuality. The new convert and the missionary would both be evangelists; and soon there would be joy in heaven over the founding of a Christian church. The church is a divine institution, and believers are obligated to associate themselves in a church-way. Having done this, they are still bound to attempt the evangelizing of the world. But being united as a church, and being bound by the command of Christ to disciple others, they must as a church act together for the evangelizing of the world. Every particular church becomes, therefore, itself a centre for the self-propagation of the gospel, a means also for the multiplication of other churches. Such a centre and means were the particular visible churches of the New Testament. They could not otherwise be addressed as golden candlesticks, in the midst of which the Son of man was to be seen walking. Paul writes to the Thessalonians: "From you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God is spread abroad."

The spread of the gospel is necessarily, in a large

degree, a matter of multiplying churches; and this fact serves both to render important, and to define, the relations which exist between the particular churches and the foreign missionary work. These relations them selves, moreover, emphasize the distinctive importance of applying our own Congregational principles to our own missionary work. It has already been said of our work of self-propagation, that the spread of Congregationalism, as a matter of principles to be embodied in an ever-increasing number of New-Testament churches, is the distinctive duty of Congregationalists. But the work of self-propagation is essentially the same on whatever ground undertaken. It is our duty to multiply New-Testament churches in China and Japan as truly as in Utah or Dakota. The personal word of Christ is indeed, Go and disciple all the nations. We have no explicit word from him which commands that we shall go and plant Congregational churches. And, as we have already seen, the primary work of evangelism is conducted by individuals, and not by churches, and consists in converting souls rather than in planting churches. We are Christians before we are Congregationalists. The distinctive doctrines of redemption take precedence in thought and activity of our distinctive doctrines of the church. Nevertheless, we are Congregationalists from principle, as well as Christians; and the doctrine of the church is no unimportant doctrine. A false doctrine of the church and an abundant corresponding false practice has hitherto been one of the chief obstacles to the Christianizing of the world. While, then, we are, together with all believers, tender and quick to recognize our obligations as Christians to spread the gospel, we are as Congregationalists distinctively obligated to multiply Congregational churches.

Our complete missionary work should be to convert men, and to associate and train the converts in the church-ways of the New Testament. We are not to do this by that slavish custom of copying the details of scriptural history, or adopting its perishing maxims, which is mere formalism, by whatever name called: we are to do this, however, by embodying principles in concrete form, by exemplifying the true doctrine of the church in numbers of particular churches. I do not hesitate, therefore, to repeat that *all our foreign missionary work should be directed, first to converting men to Christ, and then to associating and nourishing the converted in Congregationally governed churches.* We should understand it as our distinctive, — and if you insist upon it, although with aversion to the word, I will say, — our *denominational* missionary work to multiply upon the earth New-Testament churches.

A clear conception of this distinctive work involves several particulars, some of which concern the so-called home churches, others, the churches on foreign ground. But first of all must our conception be clear as to the obligation and feasibility of this work. He who does not believe that genuine Congregational churches are fitted for the needs of converts from heathenism should either revise his Congregationalism, or abjure it. As a Christian, he should not remain in a church order which is not fitted to the uses of evangelism. As only a quasi-Congregationalist, he will do less harm after having joined himself where he can be a devoted adherent both of Christ and of some particular order of the Church of Christ. The adaptability of autonomous and self-governed churches to cosmopolitan uses was quite thoroughly tested, we should suppose, in the first century of our era. "Barnabas," says Dr. Thomp-

son,[1] "was a native of Cyprus, and a Levite. Simeon was called Niger, — which some 'evangelical Christians' nowadays would spell with two g's — *black* Simeon, as Wiclif translated it. Lucius was from Cyrene in Northern Africa. Manaen was foster-brother of the late tetrarch Herod. Saul was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. Such was the missionary committee of the church at Antioch."

Not only can Congregational churches be organized in all places where the preaching of the gospel makes converts, but they can also everywhere be speedily trained to self-government as churches. Between their first organizing and their safe commitment to complete self-government, the quasi-apostolic authority of the missionary evangelist helps the transition. Under the true church polity the missionary must not withhold his hand when he has made the converts, and organized them into a particular visible church; he must also, as a foster-parent, train them to act freely and safely in this church order. He is to superintend their choice and ordination of native pastors. He is to instruct them in appropriate conduct under their pastors. He is to rebuke, admonish, warn, and threaten them, as occasion demands, in order that they may come to a speedier maturity in the attempt at self-government. But especially and very largely, yet judiciously, is he to leave the churches to themselves in order that they may have a real exercise in the thing which they are trying to learn. They must be left, in good measure, to feel the penalties of faults and the joys of successes in self-control. They will never learn self-government in a church-way otherwise than by the practice of governing themselves.

[1] New-Englander, November, 1860, p. 953, f.

Those theories of church government which place the sources of control in the clergy all very naturally distrust the power of new converts from heathenism to control themselves in the church-state. Our theory generously trusts this power; and experience shows that the trust is, on the whole, as safe as it is generous. The ease and speed with which savage peoples sometimes adopt civil self-government is a surprise to civilization. But church self-government is expected only of men who have been endowed with a double set of ennobling immunities. A greater speed in attaining its successes may then be expected.

The church composed of converts from heathenism can become self-sustaining and self-propagating as well as self-governing. In exhibiting the powers of self-support under persecution and of self-propagation in the face of difficulties, none of the churches of early Christianity were more exemplary than have been some raised in recent times from the deepest degradation of heathenism. Some sixty years since, the people of Sierra Leone numbered about a thousand. They had been taken from the holds of captured slave-ships: they were naked, wild, lazy, thieving, and brutal savages. They were devil-worshippers, holding midnight orgies of desperate pollution. A plain German laborer, illustrating the force of a consecrated individualism, in only seven years brought scores of them to Christ, and changed the aspect of the entire community. But after his death this people of Sierra Leone illustrated the self-supporting and self-propagating power of a New-Testament church. From them the Word of God so sounded abroad in that whole region, that, at the close of the first half-century, the nominal Christians in the colony were eighty thousand, the number of communi-

cants was twenty thousand. No fewer than six different missions had been established by them among the unevangelized tribes beyond the colony. With other no less conspicuous examples of the power of the local church to act as a centre of light and heat, and to keep its own hearth warm and radiating amidst the coldest, fiercest winds of persecution, — examples from Madagascar, from India, from the Sandwich Islands and the South Seas, — we might readily be made familiar.

We cannot wisely doubt the capacity of so-called heathen to exercise all the church functions of self-government, self-support, and self-propagation: the rather may we expect, from increased confidence in Congregational principles as embodied in autonomous particular churches, the most astonishing successes in the future of missions. "The chief work of evangelical Christendom for the conversion of the heathen world," said one peculiarly familiar with the facts involved, "is to plant churches instinct with gospel life in all the central and influential districts of the unevangelized land."[1]

But if the principles of the true church polity, as embodied in self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating churches, need to control our foreign missionary work at the end of the foreign field, how much more even at the end which starts from the so-called home field! These principles, in their application, lay a responsibility upon every particular visible church at home, with respect to the work of evangelism in foreign lands. For the purposes of this work the particular church acts as an individual, with an intellect to enlighten, a conscience to satisfy, a character to win and keep, I had almost said a soul to save. Individual mem-

[1] Dr. Anderson, in Foreign Missions, p. 131.

bers of the kingdom of God are bound in an individual way by the command of Christ. The command is to each lone soul: In thy loneliness serve thy Master Christ by communicating his gospel to other lone souls. But there comes also to the local church, as a church, a command of Christ. This command is historic, and given through the injunctions of apostles and the practice of faithful Christian congregations. It emphasizes the final purpose of the church. It teaches the doctrine that *each local church is in its final purpose no longer a merely local affair*. Its organism of officers, lay and clerical, its committees and boards, are for an end which lies outside of itself. Self-existence, mere existence, is no worthy end for even the poorest, weakest, and smallest of Christian churches. The poorest, weakest, and smallest church is to live and pray and labor for the conversion of the world. What right, otherwise, has the particular visible church, Congregationally governed, to make use of the universal liturgy, and pray, after the words of Jesus Christ, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth"? It has already been said that every Congregational church should contain in the very basis of its organization some recognition of its final cause as a church of Christ, and that a part of that final cause is the evangelizing of the world. I wish now to assert further, that all the life of every church should be conducted in recognition of this same final cause. The prayers of the local church should be for the conversion of the world. The interests of the local church should be largely in the conversion of the world. The work of its officers, its committees, its trustees, should have reference to this its final cause. For any so-called church of Christ to be wholly taken up with sustaining its own interests is to be unchristian, is to

forget the true functions and final purpose of so noble an institution as a church.

In all ways and by all means let the pastors of the particular Congregational churches strive to make these churches feel the obligation which attaches itself to them *as churches* to aid in evangelizing the world. The pressure of this obligation should secure in every Congregational church in Christendom three things: (1) The culture of intelligence respecting foreign missions, ending in the excitement of interest; (2) The fostering and growth of interest, leading to the use of means; (3) The multiplication and increased efficiency of means, demanding more hearty and frequent prayers, more generous gifts of workmen from our sons and daughters, and of money and supplies from our treasuries and storehouses. Every church which is at all living up to the measure of its obligation may expect from its own centre to move the whole world nearer to Christ. How utterly incalculable is the dormant force of any Christian congregation, we may learn from the case of Pastor Louis Harmes and the congregation at Herrmansburg, in Hanover. The little German village brought its power to bear upon the continent of Africa: it sent its missionaries to Australia, the East Indies, and our own Western States. It established a missionary journal which attained a circulation of fourteen thousand copies, and an annual missionary festival to which came six thousand people, including strangers from all parts of Europe. Meanwhile all the region about, which had been "benumbed by Rationalism and by a dead Orthodoxy," was so stirred into new life, that the number of communicants was multiplied to more than two thousand souls. That the particular visible church is to be, as a church, a centre of evangelism, and that it

is the duty and hope of our church order to propagate the gospel by establishing everywhere the organism of such a church, should be the undisturbed and influential conviction of every Congregationalist.

Several of the principles which underlie the relations of the community of sister Congregational churches to the work of foreign missions have already been more or less clearly exposed. The individual members of the separate churches should, by virtue of their very title to membership, be united in the work of evangelism. Those of them who cannot themselves go here or there to preach the gospel unite to send others, and to support them in their going. By this spontaneous recognition of a common obligation did the American Board of Foreign Missions come into being: by the same sort of recognition has it thus far chiefly been sustained. The communion of action which has thus far achieved the missionary enterprises of the churches has been, for the most part, of the spontaneous kind that moves upon the hearts of certain selected individuals in the churches. We are not, however, without hopes that somewhat more, and beyond all this, may yet be accomplished for foreign and home missions through this principle of communion. Strictly speaking, the communion of the churches, as distinguished from a spontaneous communion of individual members of different churches, has not yet been made efficient for the common work of evangelism. Can such a commendable efficiency be created and sustained? This is a question of no small interest to our missionary enterprises.

The second of the two distinct duties which Dr. Harris finds involved in the obligation to fellowship, he has thus expressed:[1] "Churches that acknowledge each

[1] Christian Mirror, May 16, 1865.

other as Christian churches must co-operate in advancing the common interests of Christ's kingdom." This word "must" is to be understood as expressing a moral obligation. In what manner, however, shall the obligation be enforced? The district and state convention, the association and consociation, are not adapted thoroughly to enforce the obligation. They may recommend, for the increase of intelligence and interest, the taking of missionary pamphlets and papers; for the supply of means, some one of the always numerous new schemes of systematic giving. An increased number of subscribers, and increased contributions of money, may possibly be the temporary result. But the full and complete communion of the churches is only very meagrely thereby made to be felt. Shall, then, the aid of the National Council with great confidence be invoked? Will it surely the better incite the communion of churches for the evangelizing of the world?

The very first truth in answer to this question is suggested by our past experience as incumbent on both memory and thought. More hardness to the forms of communion of churches, and more pressure in forcing these forms to acceptance, will not secure an increase in real communion of heart and in common effort for the salvation of the world: on the contrary, these things thus undertaken will tend to defeat their own end. The churches are not the more really united by votes passed in convention: the world is not the more quickly evangelized for taking an affirmative and negative show of hands. The means which lie dormant in the communion of churches are not by such mere expedients to be more efficiently employed in order to reach the end which awaits the millennial day. A really and completely united church and a converted world imply

each the other in idea and in fact; but formal measures and schemes of ecclesiastical uniformity will bring neither one to pass. Shall, then, the whole matter be left hanging mid-air? Can nothing be done to make Congregational churches, as a community of churches, use the dormant forces of their church communion to further and speed the conversion of the world? Much may ultimately be done, we gladly believe; but we shall not reach the result by forcing a mere uniformity of methods, or by appealing to a denominational pride. We must continue to appeal to the higher motives of the Christian life, to touch the springs of consecrated effort at their deepest places. The conviction that a forced and merely formal union in schemes is not the right solution of this problem is a prime requisite for considering such a problem at all.

The next truth to be insisted upon in answer to this question regards further the final cause of the churches of Christ. The end of evangelizing the world is as truly the end before all the churches in their collective working as before every particular church and every individual soul. The command of Jesus is designed to secure a manifested unity of churches in the work of converting the world. That different churches should be schismatic and quarrelsome is a breach of the bond created by their Master himself. But that sacred bond, the tie which binds our hearts in Christian love, is not merely or chiefly a barrier against quarrelling. At a prize-fight the crowd are kept from the combatants by a rope, lest the passions of the spectators should force them also into the contest. The bond of unity in Christ is not a barrier, but a bond of union *for a common end.* This tie binds men and churches into one instrument for the accomplishing of a great divine

purpose. Christian churches must be one *in order that* the world may believe on Christ. We see, then, that the very law of the communion of all churches requires that all shall unite in evangelizing the world. Congregational churches are bound to use their communion with all churches of Christ in the view to unite with all in the work of evangelism.

But certain more special forms of communion can, as we have already seen, take place only amongst churches which have the same church polity. From this fact arises the more definite and concrete obligation of all churches of our church order to unite more definitely among themselves in the evangelizing of the world. From this fact arises, also, the more definite and concrete expression of the end for which they unite. The more definite and concrete end of church communion is, for Congregational churches, the end of planting New-Testament churches far and wide in the world. This is our specific and definite end in our peculiar work of evangelism: this is the special final cause which unites us as *Congregational* churches, in the work of missions. I will say again, — again protesting against the word, — our *denominational* missionary work is the planting in foreign lands of churches which shall themselves become self-governed, self-sustaining, and self-propagating churches. To this end we should be, on principle, the most compact, aggressive, and determined denomination upon the face of the earth. To this end we should summon all the resources of our churches, should strive to unite all hearts who feel with us, and employ all hands that can be consecrated to such work.

This view of our specific work will alone serve, on the one hand, to give pith and definiteness to our aims, and, on the other hand, to guard against sectarian big-

otry, zeal, and pride. We have no right to summon the holy principle of the communion of Christian churches in order to build up a large denomination, and spread a sounding denominational name abroad throughout the earth. In itself it is a matter of no importance at all whether we are the chiefest or the meanest of the sects, at home or abroad. With regard to sectarianism, the main obligation is that we shall not be a sect at all. But we have just as little right to refrain from the specific work of propagating our principles — the principles of liberty, love, and exclusive allegiance to Jesus Christ — as embodied in Congregationally governed churches. And for this specific work we are bound to summon the principle of the communion of the churches. The truth of our case is very much as follows: Many of our leaders, pastors, and churches, have held no intelligent doctrine of the church as a means in the hand of Christ to accomplish his final purpose, — the salvation of the world. A shallow and selfish and barren expediency has taken the place of the burning devotion to principles which moved our fathers in propagating their idea of the Christian Church. As the inevitable result, this idea and practice, called Congregationalism, have not been propagated as fast and far as we could wish. And now, therefore, some are apparently proposing, for the twentieth time in the history of our church order, some new machinery of formalism, ecclesiasticism, or so-called centralizing; as though the remedy for indifference to principles were to be found in more sectarian zeal; as though, indeed, the bringing-about of a formal expression of unity would really secure from the community of Christian churches another consecrated dollar, or prayer, or laborer for missionary work. The diffusion of this truth, however, — that the very end for which

Congregational churches exist and have communion at all is not only the conversion of men to Christ, but also their establishment in self-controlled, self-sustaining, self-propagating churches, — is an indispensable requisite of our most efficient missionary work. The communion of churches is a recognized principle of the true church polity. But to what end, or for what purpose, do Congregational churches commune with one another? The end is twofold: the purpose is divided in thought, to be again united in fact. The communion of Congregational churches exists in order that the existing churches may be edified, and *in order that there may be other Congregational churches planted far and wide in the world.* The propagation of a denominational name and a system of sectarian appliances is not a worthy end of the communion of churches. The propagation of the principles of the New Testament concerning the Church, and as embodied in particular visible churches, is such a worthy end. To this end, then, must the churches be taught that their communion looks forward.

But how shall they be effectively thus taught? How shall Congregational churches be made to see and feel that Jesus Christ bids them to unite in planting his churches in the whole earth? The answers to this question are easier put upon paper than converted into realized facts. I indicate very briefly a few of the methods at our disposal: —

1. The pastors of Congregational churches must be made intelligent converts to the above-mentioned truths. The ministers who do not become missionaries, technically so called, may surely be expected to lead and instruct their people concerning the nature of the kingdom of God upon the earth. They may be expected to

instruct and lead their churches to unite with sister-churches in multiplying other churches far and wide. For what end are they set as pastors over the churches, if not to make the churches send their light abroad in the earth? No more important question can be asked of a young minister in his examination for ordination than the following: "Do you recognize your solemn responsibility before the Lord Jesus Christ to incite and lead this people in their work of evangelism, and do you before God solemnly pledge yourself bravely and lovingly to be their leader and example in this work?" When the pastors of our churches have the broad and intense spirit of true evangelists, they will lead their churches to unite in the work of evangelism.

2. The particular churches must also be made converts to the same truths. But how shall this be done? I have already said that it should be done through their pastors. I have also already said that every new church, when instituted, should acknowledge in its covenant what is its final cause as a church. It would better far carry a pledge to be a missionary church into its covenant than to retain some other pledges usually found in such covenants. The advising council should solemnly advise the new church that it comes as a Congregational church into a sisterhood of churches, under an implied pledge to join hands with them in missionary work.

3. Churches should incite, encourage, and even reprove and admonish one another with respect to their common missionary enterprises. A Congregational church which is so heretical in doctrine, and unfaithful in practice, as to take no interest or part in missions, should be dealt with in most tender Christian fashion by the neighboring churches. Delegates and visitors

should report from one church to another: they should go from churches interested to churches uninformed and uninterested, for the purpose of enlisting them in evangelistic work.

4. All the more formal means of communion, the conventions and councils, the associations and consociations, should more and more largely acknowledge in their meetings the claims upon them for interest in the missionary work of the churches. They should constantly regard, as one chief reason why they come together, the increase in vigor and effectiveness of the means employed for scattering the churches of the New-Testament order, like seeds over the face of a sown field, as thickly as churches will grow over the face of the earth.

5. The relations of the various kinds and branches of the work of evangelism must be brought into closer and more organic connections, if not of formal organization, at least of interest and life. There is "a vital connection," as Dr. E. K. Alden has declared, "of aggressive missionary energy with the fellowship of churches." [1]

From the same source I will quote, in closing, two sentences which comprehensively assert the most important truths concerning the relation of the principle of the communion of Congregational churches to the spread of missions in the world: "The only efficient bond of union for a fellowship of well-organized working churches must be, not only some common imperative work, but a peculiar kind of work; viz., a work which will at the same time develop a church, and promote the communion of churches. . . . We want no

[1] See a very interesting and instructive sermon on this subject, delivered before the American Home Missionary Society in 1872.

unity of the church except through the inspiration of some such great benevolent work as this, no human lordship over Christ's churches, but the unity in all of the same Divine Spirit, — God's own method of carrying forward to its final triumph his own glorious kingdom."

LECTURE XII.

PRESENT AND PROSPECTIVE TENDENCIES OF CONGREGATIONALISM.

If the course followed in these Lectures has been well taken, we should by this time have reached a point of view from which to make a somewhat wider and more intelligent survey of our entire field. It will belong, indeed, to those who come after us, to discover impartially the drifts or tendencies which are carrying forward the present generation of individuals and churches. Yet we who are of this generation may expect, by the study of principles as they are embodied in the institutions of our own time, to acquire some power of discernment. We may hope to discover even those very drifts or tendencies which are carrying us, with others, along upon themselves. It is wise for us occasionally to ask, By what larger influences, and in what remoter directions, are we being moved? It is not safe for us to misunderstand those influences, or to mistake their directions.

Let the plan of these Lectures be at this point momentarily recalled to mind. Their whole intent has been to present an analysis and survey of the principles which underlie the true Church Polity, especially as that polity has been more or less completely realized in Modern Congregationalism. That our own church

order has been the only or the complete exemplification of all these principles, we have not once claimed.

The analysis, having first been made, has afterward been justified by finding the very same principles which it discovered interwoven with, and giving form and life to, all the distinctive movements of the most Christian churches. It has been seen that the Word of God in the Scriptures must, according to our formal principle, be regarded as giving the indestructible norm of a true church polity: it has also been seen that the doctrinal substance of this polity is, according to the material principle, concealed in this persuasion, — every individual believer, and every particular visible church of Christ, has full and immediate communion, for purposes of doctrine and of self-control, with the illumining Spirit of Christ. Communion of the soul with God, communion of the spiritually enlightened human spirit with the illumining Divine Spirit, is, then, the one underlying and organific idea of our church order. The way in which this church order emphasizes and strives to realize this idea, both for the individual believer and for the particular visible church, accounts for all those more patent distinctions which differentiate it from the other church orders of Christendom. It differs from them, not in that it asserts, while they deny, its formal and its material principle: it differs, rather, in the degree of intensity and thoroughness with which it asserts both these principles.

Certain selected topics have been discussed in the light of this analysis, and with a view to show the pertinency in application of these principles to all the more important activities and interests of church life. We trust, that, even by the dim shining of our words, these principles have been seen to be not only noble in them-

selves, but nobly adapted to the needs of manhood and to the necessities of faith, and as well capable of wide and vigorous self-propagation over the face of the whole earth.

A single caution with reference to the course traversed, and we will then turn our faces from the past to look upon the surrounding present, and toward that future which lies just before. Doubtless much dissatisfaction may arise in your minds as to the indefiniteness in which certain questions bravely and frankly raised by our church order have finally been left. The mind likes the thought of the infallible in church polity as well as in doctrine and life. There is a sort of premonitory aching in the heart of the young minister for some guaranteed and patented charm against mistakes of judgment and against the fruits of such mistakes. Ah! if he could but be told beforehand precisely what to do in each emergency which is liable or possible to arise. The church order which has a Bishop or a Book of Discipline to relieve this very natural anxiety brings a great balm of consolation to such an aching heart. On the other hand, the pastor of long standing, whose church affairs have not gone conspicuously well, is tempted to think that they would have gone much better under a different way of ordering church affairs. And this feeling may not unfrequently be true; for the Congregational way of managing churches is confessedly not favorable to the success of men as pastors, who must either lean hard on others for support, or else have a mistaken and overweening confidence in their ability to stand alone. It will be one coveted result of our common work of inquiry, if we are all immediately persuaded to abandon the expectation of attaining the infallible in church polity. Even if the infallible in

doctrine, as to all its details and precise shades of statement, be to be found outside of the Divine Mind itself, it is certain that there is no infallible system for the constitution, discipline, and worship of the churches. At least, such an infallible polity is not to be practically attained this side of the completed wisdom and perfected holiness of all the members of the churches. If we should decide it better not to bear those ills we have, and so the rather "fly to others that we know not of," and if in our flight we should take the wings of the morning, and go to the uttermost confines of the church universal and of universal church history, we should still be far removed from an "infallible polity." We should probably, however, discover more both of our blessings and of our own faults. We should discover, that upon the very features of our church order now esteemed less honorable, we ought to have bestowed the more abundant honor. We should, perhaps, also discover that the really covetable features of the other denominations are those which we have, in fact, not coveted, and are those which we might imitate with no great difficulty while remaining in our own. For instance, the zeal, self-denial, versatility, and audacity of Methodism are the very qualities which we have most need to borrow from them, rather than rebuke in them; but we have need to avoid, rather than to covet, their bishop, presiding elder, compacted organization, and hot sectarianism.

Doubtless, let the admission be at once and frankly made, in making the very applications of those principles which have been most discussed in these Lectures, many important contingencies not contemplated herein may at times arise. To plant ourselves, for instance, upon the principle of a regenerate membership, in both

the positive and the negative requisitions of that principle, may involve us in certain most puzzling questions, and even in apparently dangerous acts. How shall we, when thus involved, then proceed? In general, it may be said that a wise and firm adherence to principle is the expedient and safest course for both pastors and churches. As to the details of conduct in which the adherence to principles should be expressed, Congregationalism, in large measure, refers us to its common law. Almost all of the forms of procedure for instituting a church, for ordaining its officers, for calling councils, for expressing and ratifying the decrees of councils, as these forms are given in our Congregational manuals, are not, in their essence, to be spoken of as Congregationalism at all; but they are parts, although it may be still doubtful and disputable parts, of the common law in present use by Congregationalists. And the due use of past results of experience as expressed in common law is, as we have seen, a derived principle of our church order. The common-law principle provides, then, not only that each individual shall use his sanctified common sense, but it also provides a certain set of rules and customs in which the *common* sense has taken concrete form. These rules and customs are themselves to be used, not as integral parts of Congregationalism, — for they can never become this — but in a principled and truly helpful way. And, whenever principle compels us to set aside any of these accredited rules and customs, this, also, is fearlessly and yet wisely to be done. Nor does the doing of this constitute in itself a breach of communion; nor is it to be treated as a result of the spirit of segregation and schism. Where the rules and customs of Congregationalism have grown into forms which controvert its very principles, those

forms are on principle to be accused and opposed. They are, in such case, not to be regarded as mere developments of our church order which it is desirable to secure, but rather as dangerous accretions which it is necessary to purge away. For to fall back from rules and customs upon principles is of the very essence of Congregationalism. But the proper course of purgation is not the act of cutting which separates brethren, but the continuous cutting-away of error which relieves all the brethren of their accretion of error while they still remain united in the remaining truth. To have rules and customs which may not be criticised and amended is uncongregational.

While, then, I recommend to you the study of so-called manuals for the details of law and custom contained in them, and recommend also that you should, as long as you can do so in a principled way, conform with all the details of this law and custom, I recommend, the rather and the more heartily, the study of the principles of Congregationalism as they are to be seen developed and illustrated in its own history. This study of history you must, for the most part, conduct by unprejudiced reading of the older books. But, above all, ground yourself in principles; for, if you are not a Congregationalist from principle, you would really better not be one at all. The very nature of our church order forbids its successful working as a mere matter of expediency. To treat and hold it as a matter of expediency is, indeed, very inexpedient: to treat it and to hold it as a matter of principle is the only true expediency. If the general form of your church polity is indifferent to you, by all means take up with some specific polity where the class of indifferents can more safely leave the interested to manage

matters entirely in their own way. And let me assure you, that if you will study Congregationalism, not as a matter of rules and customs fit for record in a manual, but as a matter of principles moving forward and diffusing themselves in all its history, you will be likely to become its hearty convert. You will be willing to dispense with the definite regulations of the bishopric, or the book of discipline, if only you can yourself intelligently take part in the work of getting for these large and noble principles a completer realization in the churches of Christ. Nor need this work seem indefinite and in mid-air; for, as we have already seen, the planting, nourishing, and multiplying of churches which give a concrete embodiment to these principles, — of churches that are self-controlled, self-sustaining, and self-propagating, although in loving and manifest communion with one another, — is the distinctive *denominational* work of Congregationalism.

With these introductory cautions we turn now tc contemplate, in the light of our past discussion, certain drifts and tendencies of present Congregationalism.

The distinguishing and significant feature of the church polity of the present time is its extreme restlessness. The spirit of change seems to have pervaded nearly all personalities and institutions: the desire or the foreboding of change seems to have taken possession of all hearts. Customs are to be altered; laws and precedents are liable to be speedily or even scornfully set aside. The formalities of the ages, the worship and hymns of the ages, the churches of the ages, the doctrines of the ages, are all to be considered from multiform and shifting points of view. Somewhat, it is universally assumed, must speedily be done for the better organization of the Christian Church, even though

the precise somewhat to be done cannot be described with great definiteness by any leading mind. That the affairs of our own church order have not hitherto gone thoroughly well, all its adherents are ready to admit: therefore all will at once and eagerly, as a penance for the common past indifference, undertake the emendation of these affairs. That many proposals for changes are running to and fro among the Congregational churches, there can be little doubt; but there is more doubt as to whether thereby knowledge will be greatly increased. Whenever we seem ready to secure a temporary rest from new endeavors at improving the situation, the ghost of evolution — that charming and royal shade which haunts all modern theology as well as science — stalks upon the scene to say, "Do not forget: this visitation is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose."

Concerning this restlessness which both afflicts and spurs to new endeavors the Congregational church polity, we observe at once the following truth. This restlessness is only one form of the common manifestation which now pervades the entire life of Christendom. Somewhat new and somewhat momentous, the momentously new, hovers in the air over all businesses, politics, social customs, and religious forms. This amazing stir in the life-blood of the nations reaches every minutest artery and vein, and quickness to new activity both the decay and the repair of the body politic in Church and State. Of this universal restlessness our corporate church existence cannot well fail to partake. The unthinking indifference of the middle ages as to civil and religious institutions and doctrines has given way to its modern opposite. The arm of the great Titan is raised to break the mould of the very customs which he has

himself sweat so long in making. And whereas the care bestowed upon a true church polity by the Puritans was for a time lost in the polemical zeal over certain disputed doctrines, but has of late re-appeared in other forms, it is not strange that this care should, under the circumstances, express itself in restless planning for ill-considered change.

Three or four of the more specific manifestations or results of this prevalent spirit of restlessness need to be considered in order that we may comprehend those tendencies which are discernible in the church polity of the age. The prevalent feeling is one of dissatisfaction with the present organization of the Christian Church. Any special dissatisfaction with Congregationalism may be considered as in part one manifestation of the larger spirit of dissatisfaction. The spirit of change always tends to find fault with the old, to accuse the older institutions and forms for the ill successes experienced, and to long and work for some change in institutions and forms. It might be supposed that the reverse process would be the truly natural course. It might be supposed that men always become rationally dissatisfied with the old because they have actually found it imperfect or harmful, and that they therefore reasonably seek and plan for some change; but probably, in most cases, the dim unconscious restlessness of spirit is the general movement out of which the special dissatisfaction primarily comes. Of Congregationalism it is not true that we have any sufficient and rational ground for being dissatisfied with any of its more ancient and honorable forms; and certainly we cannot wish to effect a change in the principles which characterize the true church polity. The real and rather shameful truth is that most men

have not for a hundred and fifty years given enough of honest and wise thought to any of the more important forms of such a polity to be entitled to a trustworthy opinion on grounds of experience as to whether or not they admit of any change. We share, indeed, in the spirit of restlessness which pervades all kinds and degrees of life. We find enough of imperfection in Congregational churches and institutions, most of which, as we do not like to reflect, is directly due to the indifference and unwisdom of those who have managed the working of these churches and institutions. We therefore conclude, and logically, that it is easier to blame and change the ancient form than to blame and change the men who administer the form. Or it may be that a re-action from the excesses of this very spirit of change has set in with certain classes, and that this re-action itself takes the form of dissatisfaction with that mode of governing churches which is believed most to invite continual change. The mind thus afflicted seeks rest in some compacted and concrete authority which may more successfully resist the innovations of a restless age. Having taken up the cry of Faber's hymn: —

> "O Lord, my heart is sick,
> Sick of this everlasting change,
> And life runs tediously quick
> Through its unresting race and varied range,"

the heart thinks to attribute its sickness to the cramped and unskilful construction of the cradle in which its infancy was rocked, or of the house in which its earlier manhood was spent. Just one more change from Congregationalism to something else, or of Congregationalism itself in one or two particulars, and then, so the patient thinks, we might all quietly and safely rest from change.

The prevalence of this feeling of dissatisfaction with all the more ancient and honorable customs of our church order is, indeed, a notable phenomenon of the times. Few congregations are satisfied with the time-honored relations to their pastors; as few pastors, with those which the men of the past sustained to their congregations. Rapid changes between the two result from this dissatisfaction. We have various reasons for each one of these particular changes, rehearsed before our councils and upon the pages of our papers; but the subtle, gnawing pain of restlessness is the one explanation for the greater part of them all. Few adherents of the Congregational church polity are thoroughly well satisfied with all its principles. There is not one of all its more important, ancient, and honorable institutions or customs, which a large number of nominal Congregationalists would not gladly see changed. Indeed, the talk and effort for important changes in them all are but an open secret. The ancient customs of the advisory or mutual council among neighboring churches, of ruling the local church by a body of men called elders and selected from its own members, of the ordination at the hands of every church of its own pastor, of permitting the individual believer to make his own profession of faith, have already undergone an almost total change.

But this feeling of dissatisfaction is not an affliction peculiar to our church order. It permeates and modifies all institutions and customs, and stimulates to rapid and unthinking movements in every form of life. It is one manifestation, everywhere found, of the blind and impulsive, or more intelligent, restlessness of the age. Princes and peasants, artists and artisans, priests and politicians, rich and poor, young and old, are alike

afflicted with discontent. All commercial, political, educational, and social institutions and affairs are rendered soluble by this spirit. All the religious denominations of Christendom are as much out of entire self-complacency as are we: they have, indeed, on the whole, as good reason to be dissatisfied with themselves. There is not one of them which is not bubbling in its own denominational kettle, while the attendant cooks are quite unable to tell when it will boil over the sides. Even the Eternal City is shaken, and the Pope is made to know, that, although infallible in matters of religious doctrine, he cannot safely predict what transformations will take place in the church order of which he is the infallible head.

This feeling of dissatisfaction with the present organization of the Christian Church is by no means an unmixed evil. It is but true that no present form of organization faithfully represents the ideal form of church life. Craving is the spur of life: self-complacency is likely to put a bridle upon progress, or even to tie a halter about its neck. The objectionable features of this dissatisfaction with Congregationalism, even within our own ranks, are largely caused by ignorance as to the proper objects to which the dissatisfaction should be applied. That things are largely awry in the universe there can be no doubt. The nineteenth century was indeed at one time heralded as the dawn of millennium. Mechanics, science, and humanity were in those days expected rather speedily and easily to bring forward the reign of universal plenty and peace. The song of jubilee was noisily sung through the streets of Mansoul. But the voices which joined so lustily in the chorus have either died away, or grown somewhat cracked and thin. And now a shallow and despairing

pessimism in philosophy, literature, and even in theology, seems on the point of substituting itself for this former shallow and gushing optimism. The churches are being infected, by way of antidote for the disease of religious optimism, with an equally dangerous and disorganizing religious pessimism. Since the kingdom did not come by steam and electricity in our day, — and what other day, after all, so fit for its coming as *our* day? — we are much in doubt whether it will come at all. Within our church order, as elsewhere, much dissatisfaction and discouragement are the due and necessary re-action from former inordinate claims and hopes. The feeling of dissatisfaction seeks relief: it hopes for relief in changing some of the things which seem to have worked ill in that order. This feeling is, on the whole, a hopeful one to see; for it promises new discussion, and new knowledge upon the matters discussed.

This feeling of dissatisfaction has hitherto, however, for the most part, fastened upon the wrong subjects for change: it has mistaken the causes of the evils with which it is dissatisfied. Let us see clearly and speak plainly upon this point. Some Congregationalists appear to be dissatisfied even with the ancient principles of their church polity; they doubt whether these are New-Testament principles; they have little doubt that such principles will not succeed. Others are, while claiming heartily to accept the principles, dissatisfied with their previous concrete expression, even in the most important institutions, customs, and rules of our church order. It is always objectively possible, we will admit, that some of these institutions, customs, or rules, may need to be changed. Progress by change is a recognized principle of our church order. It is, however,

in my opinion true, that not a single speaker or author among the most dissatisfied has thus far shown in any satisfactory way, — by fair argument or by appeal to history, — that any of these more important institutions, customs, or rules has been a true cause of the evils with which he is dissatisfied. Much less has it been made in any good degree probable that any of the proposed changes would at all tend to remove the causes of dissatisfaction. Personally I have not the least objection to one or more denominational creeds, or to several denominational catechisms. It has never, however, been shown by their advocates, that they would *of themselves*, in the least degree, tend to remove the evils against which they are aimed, or help forward the good results to further which they are intended. This need of new creeds is not to be shown by clamor but by argument. Personally I shall be glad to see the National Council made most thrifty and respectable; but that it can be made a panacea for the spirit of isolation and self-seeking, or even a serviceable instrument for an efficient denominational centralizing, I have yet to see the first item of valid proof. Such proof will not come by partisan accusation or hurrahing. In all these ways of securing an apparent uniformity we have some reason to fear the results of very manifest tendencies to which reference will soon be made. He who expresses such fear is not to have his voice drowned by renewed clamor. Just at the period when the churches are drawing more closely together for informal communion in Christ's great work of propagating and nourishing Christian institutions, we have more to fear from schism than from any other internal evil. And schism will surely result from the attempt to force a uniformity which is feared and disliked, whether with

or without due reasons, by so many Congregationalists. If we will use the spirit of unity in our work as churches, we shall have no need to enforce uniformity. In general we must come to the conclusion that *the real grounds of dissatisfaction with Congregationalism do not lie in the nature of its ancient institutions, customs, and rules, but in the manner of the use which we have made of them.* The fault is not with the Congregationalism of our fathers so much as with the Congregationalists of the present day. The changes needed are not so much in our polity as in ourselves.

Our general thought may be made more specific by an illustration or two. We hear much hope expressed by some as to the unifying effect of the National Council, and, by contrast, much complaint of the previous lack of fellowship amongst Congregational churches. But what course have the complainants, in common with the majority perhaps, hitherto pursued in the matter of the fellowship of churches? Have we all been as brave, frank, unselfish, and kind as our principles require, or even as were our earliest fathers, in fostering by mutual councils the fellowship of the churches? Have the pastors of the large and influential churches in the centres of population been prodigal of their time and care in fellowship with surrounding smaller and weaker churches? Shall we certainly accomplish in the great council the very thing we have not taken due pains to accomplish in many smaller councils? And, further, shall we, by majorities and indirection, discipline unsound pastors and churches so as to convince them of error, and lead them to the faith, better than we might have done by that direct and courageous rebuke of doctrinal error which our ancient polity makes incumbent upon us? We do well indeed to be

dissatisfied; but we should do better to make sure that our dissatisfaction is well directed. And it may turn out, that not our ancient polity, but the conduct of its modern representatives, viz., ourselves, is the very fittest subject for dissatisfaction and for improvement. Christian pastors cannot in self-indulgence neglect all the minor and local opportunities for a real fellowship with neighboring churches, and then satisfy the demands of the principle of fellowship by an annual attendance upon the State Association, or a triennial election of themselves as delegates to the National Council.

By all means, then, let solid and permanent improvements be gained from a reasonable dissatisfaction; but let fair arguments, and diligent attention to history, first make it clear that the proposed subjects of dissatisfaction, and the consequent changes, cover the real grounds for the feeling. This drift of unrest in discontent with the past is hopeful for the future of a true church polity; but it is at present quite too blind and ignorant to serve as a guide into safe and helpful changes.

Another manifestation of the pervasive spirit of the times is seen in the tendency to exalt the beneficial results of so-called force and authority. The most distressing and alarming feature of our present condition as a church order lies herein. The ancient and honorable custom of Congregationalism, nay, its acknowledged and principled obligation, has been to appeal to reason and to the Word of God, and then to rest confidently in the appeal. It has aimed to make its doctrines, not rationalistic in the unworthy sense of the word, but rational in the highest sense; it has committed its polity to the fairness and good judgment of the average Christian; it has always hitherto been ready to answer with reasons, and to argue its case

with all inquirers. But the present hour feels the impulses of another kind of movement. This movement is impatient of prolonged and careful inquiry; it scorns all lengthy and detailed examination; it cannot spare time to consider in the presence of opposers its own proposals as they appear in the two lights of the natural eye and the eye of God in Scripture. The tendency is toward a large confidence in mere success, and, since force seems to win success, toward a longing after *force*. There is force in majorities who can limit the speeches of their opponents to a few minutes each, and then close their own ears against these very speeches, resting in the assurance that the force is, after all, when it comes to voting, with the majorities. In former days Congregationalism has not, indeed, been without sporadic exhibitions of such force. We have already seen how Rev. Increase Mather makes evident that the synods of 1657 and 1662 had no intention of listening to reason, but pushed on to the exercise of the authority which is in the majority vote. But all such exhibitions are contrary to the real genius and spirit of Congregationalism. To reach in hot haste the expression of authority in the majority vote, and to suppose that the outcry of opposing reasons is thereby hushed, seems quite too much the drift of disposition in our church order at the present time. We find it difficult to remember that even the Westminster Assembly, although it kept squinting at the probable effect of the *force* which was in the approach of the Scotch army, gave to the minority, headed by Dr. Thomas Goodwin, rather the larger place in the general debate. The tendency to drive things by so-called force, to trust in force, to scorn lengthy argument, and silence minorities by the majority vote, to distrust the

judgment of the people, fairly and deliberately taken, as to what is reasonable and conformable to the gospel, is an alarming tendency in our church order. It certainly is quite the reverse of the tendency displayed in that first synod, which debated its one subject for twenty-four days, and did this to such good effect that those who came together with hearts exasperated finally departed in peace.

Of this tendency, however, we notice that it also is not confined to our church order or to ecclesiastical affairs alone. The method of iron and fire is apparently coming again into great esteem. Somewhat in politics must be at once accomplished, and the opposing and disintegrating forces are strong. The masterful grip is needed: the iron hand of some Goetz von Berlichingen is required to quell the mob. Our American politics is showing a surprising esteem for mere success, and, therefore, for that crowding and pushing-forward to success which comes of sheer force. The same tendency is seen in business. Great corporations and immense fortunes have force: principles and arguments are to stand one side while the strong work their way to the front. Large churches, immense denominations, have force. To become large as a church, immense as a denomination, force is needed. Argument seems mere talk. It is understood to be not in order to present reasons: reasons, when presented, are not presented in order to convince the judgment, but for the display of force. In legislative halls and ecclesiastical tribunals votes are counted before the case is heard. The end to be reached is the expression of the bare unreasoning and selfish will of the majority. Even this will cannot be allowed to come to self-consciousness: it must be forced by the stronger will. The majority is manufactured by the leaders and by force.

At the same time we find, of course, a loss of confidence in the ability and honest intent of the people at large to do intelligently right. There is no time or disposition to submit an argued case to the majority at large, in the calm confidence that reason will, if it can have its free working, serve them well. Even the majority are not expected to reason in order to vote wisely: they are expected to vote in order that the measure may have force.

From this same tendency comes that hot and unthinking partisanship which we used to flatter ourselves we had almost as a denomination escaped. The temptation becomes strong to take things "by parties in a lump." Sides must be formed, that force may be met with force. The noble mind looks sadly through all this tinsel of so-called authority, and sees a few noble forms standing up, two centuries and a half ago, to face the authority of all Christendom with the declaration of what is reasonable, and according to the Word of God. Of those forms one is that of Dr. Thomas Goodwin. From him there come to us words as noble as is the attitude of the man who speaks them: "This I say, and I say it with much integrity, I never yet took up religion by parties in the lump. I have found by trial of things that there is some truth on all sides: I have found holiness where you would little think it, and so likewise truth. And I have learned this principle, which I hope I shall never lay down till I am swallowed up of immortality; and that is, to acknowledge every good thing, and hold communion with it, in men, in churches, in whatsoever else. I learn this from Paul, I learn this from Jesus Christ himself."

Another threatening tendency which seems to show

itself in our church order is intimately connected with the foregoing. This is the tendency to indirection. When the quick pushing of measures to the position of apparent force seems indispensable to success, it soon happens that the temptation to somewhat more or less remotely resembling intrigue is felt. The words of his courtier to Duke George of Saxony, "Straightforward is the best runner," are said to have made a great impression upon pastor Harms. With them as his motto, the strong and intense personality of this honest workman could move thousands of adherents, and make itself felt to remote parts of the earth. But, when this straightforward course is forsaken by those who are still eager to reach speedily their goal, the manner of indirection is necessarily the next resort.

Instances of the same use of indirection are by no means wanting in the earlier history of our churches. We have seen that Rev. John Wise does not hesitate to accuse certain ones of his brethren — we hope without malice in the accusation — of planning "to intreague others of a lower set of intellectuals." But the ancient and principled customs of our church order are quite fixed in another direction. "Straightforward is the best runner," might as fitly have been the motto of the wisest and most influential of the Congregational fathers as of pastor Harms. Frank dealing, open and equal debate, fearless rebuke, and outspoken challenge of evil, but all these without meanness or malice, are congenital with Congregationalism. It does not favor the indirection of conscience and utterance which is made necessary by required and unalterable creeds. It has never found place for the secrecy and winding of the junto or conclave. In its settlement of issues, brother is to meet brother with frank and fair expression

of views and accompanying reason. The open assembly, the court of equals, the fair and full debate, ending by the grace of God in substantial community of opinions, are distinguishing features of our church order. No selected few, clergy or laymen, are to manage affairs after the manner of the politicians, or the ecclesiastics of Rome.

It would be quite unfitting to the present occasion and opportunity, were I to promulgate the charge, or even the suspicion, of indirection against any individuals or parties in the Congregational churches of to-day. It would, however, be a case of delinquency, and irrational dread of seeming to be invidious, did I not call your attention to this general evil tendency. With the frankness which belongs to the spirit of our church order let us recognize the fact, — an evil tendency of indirection is threatening our beloved polity. We may see this tendency in individuals, in individual churches, and in the fellowship of churches. There is a tendency to conceal the reasons for our ecclesiastical procedures, or only to give those which are inferior and superficial. Members of the particular churches are disciplined by indirection. They are tolerated without examination, until toleration becomes inexpedient, and then retired from the churches with a polite bow, instead of suffering Christian excommunication. Not that the attempt to revive the mediæval horrors of excommunication by bell, book, and candle, would improve our Congregationalism. But we are forgetting that only the frank and loving course which Christ commanded is binding upon our churches. The particular visible church should weep over the brother who has become an adulterer, a liar, or a thief, and should use all means, in the facing of all the world's scorn, to reclaim him: it has

no right, however, to pretend that he is not that very sinner which he has been convicted of being. In advising churches concerning the settlement and dismissal of pastors, the same evil tendency to indirection far too often controls the advice. The real case, and that only, should be given to the advisory council as its ground of advice: the council should refuse to give advice without a frank and full statement of the grounds upon which the advice is to be rendered. If the people are tired of their minister, let them say the truth; let them not pretend solicitude for his health. If the minister needs a larger salary, let him bring his need before his brethren; let him not attribute the proposed change of place to the exigencies of his wife's relatives. There is far too much indirection in the supply of vacant churches with candidates for their pastorates. If we must have the system of candidating, we must be content to tolerate enough evils at the best. Let us not convert the necessary evils into positive immoralities by suffusing them with a strong tincture of nauseous political intrigue. In the use of the more formal means of fellowship, we are suffering in our interests and in our morals by a large measure of indirection. Difference of opinions is not necessarily harmful: the frank expression of such difference is not an unmixed evil. Let it but appear that both parties are honest and charitable in opinion, and even sharp open debate need not provoke schism. But indirection is not only in general likely to become unchristian: it is also certain to be peculiarly mischievous in the workings of a polity such as ours. The tendencies of our councils, conventions, associations, and consociations, are quite too much toward this evil, roundabout fashion of carrying measures, and influencing views. The committee — which cannot even

itself be chosen by a genuine expression of the popular will, but must be appointed by another and nominating committee — is the result and expression of this tendency to indirection. Wheel within wheel, and then another wheel within that wheel, seems necessary to the gearing and running of our greatest, our National Council. There must be committees; and, when they are objected to, the very manifest and satisfactory answer is, How, otherwise, shall things be set and kept running? But the very means most indispensable may be the means most used by this spirit of indirection.

Of this tendency, as well as of the foregoing, we can plead, in partial excuse, it is not peculiar to the working of our church order. Indirection is the method of American politics: indeed, it almost seems as though it were the indispensable method of all politics. The man who wishes office does not frankly say, I want the office, and for these reasons I think I might serve the people well. The politician shrewdly calculates that the dark horse has the best chance of winning the race. Are not the Christian churches at large losing some of the instinctive manly abhorrence of all intrigue, and the disposition to avoid circumlocution, which were at one time thought necessary to a Christian character? The writing of men whose pens are as blunt as Ruskin's is very distasteful to this modern spirit of concealment and indirection. The man who speaks bluntly is liable to be considered the most wily of all men, in the suspicion that his very bluntness is a cloak for some kind of covetousness. How heartily, and with what good reason, did Dr. Arnold hate what he called "Oxford caution," — the indirection which is sometimes supposed to be necessary to the bearing of a wise and cultured soul! Is it too much to say that for our polity to partake in

the maxims and methods of politics is, of all the evils which have befallen it, most to be hated and dreaded; and that the simple, direct, and brave but kindly ways of the religion of Jesus are the best and strongest ties for binding together Christian churches?

Together with these evil tendencies of our present Congregationalism, we may profitably consider certain other tendencies which promise a decided increase of our good.

There is a warmer interest in the specialties of the doctrine of the church and in church polity than formerly obtained. This increase of interest is the pledge of an approaching increase of influence. The eager questioning of old forms, and even the hasty devising of supposed improvements, will not eventuate in other than predominantly good results. Especially are we glad to believe that there is, in the actual operation of our system of church order, an increase of effort to reach the poor with the gospel, and an increase of confidence in the fitness of this order to maintain Christian work amongst such poor. Moreover, there is an increasing amount of hearty, informal co-operation in the great work of missions: there is more of enlightened effort to propagate Congregational churches in all the foreign fields than was the case fifty and twenty-five years ago. Finally, all the questions which concern the right organization and government of the church are more nearly commanding the scholarly research and earnest thought which are their due.

The tendencies of present Congregationalism are, on the whole, such as both to warn and to encourage the adherents of this form of church polity. We are warned to beware of accusing forms and customs of those failures which are due rather to misuse of them; to beware

of ill-advised changes, while at the same time not refusing to make any legitimate alterations of the justness of which we are well advised; to beware of trusting to so-called force, while at the same time excluding our minds from the force of rational considerations; to beware of refusing to minorities the fullest opportunity to make obvious the reasonableness of their views; and, above all, to beware of using in the things of Christ's kingdom that dangerous and despicable indirection which belongs, indeed, to the chicanery of politics, but which is unworthy and forbidden for followers of our Lord.

And what, we will inquire as the last topic of this Course of Lectures, — what is the outlook for Congregationalism? To play the part of prophet in the predictive function of the prophetic office should surely be the last role of all. As to the power of any human judgment to foresee the details of the future of our church polity, or to provide beforehand for the exigencies which will surely arise, we have no confidence whatever. This polity freely admits of changes in its rules and practices, if such changes do not contravene its fundamental principles, and can be made serviceable to a real advancement of its legitimate ends. We may not boast of its present development, that it is, like the crowing of Chaucer's chaunteclere, so fine "it might not ben amended." But we can expect but little from changes in form which are not prompted and filled by a larger measure of the spirit of Christ. If the demand for uniformity pushes on until it detrudes charity, and evokes that old enemy of unity which is the spirit of schism, the compacter system of church order which results will itself break into new fragments, and the history of church government will repeat itself again.

We may possibly come to have a new creed, which will be, in fact, regarded by the churches of the future as the Westminster and Savoy Confessions were by the churches of two centuries since. If this result could come about, it would, perhaps, be well. But if the effort for creed and catechism result in the semblance of uniformity where real unity of belief does not exist, or in the division of churches upon the old ground of conformity and nonconformity to a written symbol, then, too, the means designed to secure a greater unity will prove to be only the instrument of schism. The student of the history of the Church cannot forget what her teachings upon this point have been. The influence of a variety of creeds, if they are developed in the unity of one essential faith, and of one pervading atmosphere of fraternal love, is not toward the fostering of either infidelity or schism. It is not minute mental analysis, resulting in differing phases of religious thought and of expression to that thought, which divides the church of Christ. The influence of variety may rather be, and indeed normally is, toward the quickening and stimulating of minds in the contemplation of religious truth. The benefit of this process of analysis can no more be gained by the individual or the particular church, without self-participation, than food can be assimilated by one person which has been eaten by another. And, furthermore, it is just this complex and vast process, in which many thinkers participate, and to which they contribute varied elements, that has brought into being the great creeds of Christendom. It is not within the power of each thinker, or of every age in the church, to produce a great historic creed. The nobler Declarations of Faith were not merely manufactured to order on demand. Myriads of indi-

vidual minds and hearts have been drawn upon to furnish material and form for that product which is a symbol, sign, and flag, to a great division of the Church of Jesus Christ. The life-blood of the genuine creed is expressed by the strong arm of Providence, and generally under the pressure of great persecution or other weighty necessities.

We may possibly have in the near future another era of systematizing Christian truth: this era may possibly result in the production of one or more great creeds. But, whenever the truly great creed shall appear, it will be no product of merely human industry, a somewhat of merchantable sort, a coin with which to buy and sell the reputation for orthodoxy. And meanwhile we may perhaps most safely content ourselves in the imitation of our forefathers, who, when they found themselves afflicted with moral degeneracy or doctrinal unsoundness, sometimes renewed publicly, not their creed, but their covenant with one another and with God.

Again: we may possibly come, through the thrift of the National Council, or otherwise, to have a more visibly compact and centralized form of church government: we may possibly come to have this without violating the principles of Christ's exclusive rulership, of the equality and self-control of the individual, and of the autonomy of the local church. We may possibly find some set and formal means for really cultivating and honestly expressing an improved spirit of communion amongst the churches. If such an end through such means can be reached, the end may justify the means. More probably we shall find that all efforts in this direction will have resulted as of old; for again and again have these efforts been repeated in our church order, again and again has the result been that either

of failure or of increased division of feeling and life. Surely history may have taught us how easy it is to make the most stringent and elaborate forms of ecclesiastical arrangement subserve the interests of the dominant party, whether this be the party of conservatism or of progress, of the "old lights" or the new lights," of so-called orthodoxy or of so-called heresy. We may remind ourselves how New-England theology one day turned the tables upon the men who had opposed it, when, by the silent advances of thought and the conquests of reflection and argument, it had attained the upper hand. The consociation in Connecticut, which had formerly been, in some instances, to the men of the "new light," an instrument of almost unbearable ecclesiastical tyranny and oppression, afterward became their own instrument for vexing their opponents. They then beat the swords which had pierced their own breasts into ploughshares for turning up the hearts of their variant brethren.

Yet we look into the future confidently expecting to see the true doctrine of the church, and the realizing of that true doctrine in the life of all believers, accomplished upon earth. In a noteworthy article[1] upon Congregationalism, written by Dr. Leavitt nearly fifty years ago, he quotes these remarkable words from the writings of Thomas Hooker: "These two things seem to be great reserves of inquiry for this last age of the world. 1. Wherein the spirituall will of Christ's kingdome consists, the manner how it is revealed and dispensed to the souls of his servants inwardly. 2. The order and manner how the government of his kingdome is managed outwardly in the churches. Upon these two hinges the tedious agitations that are stirring in

[1] See the Christian Spectator for 1831, p. 362.

the earth turn, — to set forwards the shakings of heaven and earth which are to be seen even at this day." These words evince the premonition that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the doctrine of the Church are the two chief inquiries which the Christian mind will undertake in its future progress, and that the practical adjustment and exemplification of these two doctrines will be the great end of the future practical activities of the church. In connection with these thoughts let us consider this additional fact. The doctrine of Sacred Scripture is also, and almost pre-eminently, moving the thoughts of men. The practical side of this doctrine inquires how the Bible may be, in the light of modern science and criticism, vindicated as the sole objective rule of faith and discipline, and how it may be used for the conversion of the world and the edifying of the church. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the doctrine of the Bible, and the doctrine of the Church, will undoubtedly in coming time seek urgently for full philosophical consideration, and for practical exemplification by the disciples of Jesus Christ. But the former two doctrines are precisely those, which, in one form of their development, compose the fundamental and distinctive principles of Congregationalism. The Congregational doctrine of the Holy Spirit affirms that He, with the fulness of all his gifts, communicates directly, and without the mediation of the individual clergyman or the tradition of churchly authority, with the soul of every believer and with the congregation of believers in every particular visible church. The believer and the local church may, then, for enlightenment both as to doctrine and as to conduct, turn immediately to the Spirit of Christ. The Congregational doctrine of Sacred Scripture affirms it to be the sole objective authority

for the discipline as well as faith of the church. Congregationalism blends this doctrine of the Bible with the foregoing doctrine of the Spirit, by asserting its complete confidence in the essential unity of the Word of God in Scripture and the Spirit of God in the believer's soul. To find this point of unity it invites every Christian individual and every Christian church to make diligent and untiring search. Now, that these forms of the doctrines of the Bible and of the Holy Spirit will be substantially triumphant with the future of the church, we have no manner of doubt; for they embody the essential elements of all the different forms which the doctrines have assumed in all ages and branches of the church. The future of Congregationalism, so far as the prevalence of its fundamental formal and material principles is concerned, is satisfactorily assured. However the laws and customs of our so-called polity may change, the stamps upon the two sides of our coin — the image of the divine word subjective and the image of the divine word objective, which are two copies of the image of the same king — will never be effaced. This coin will come to currency in all Christendom: it will displace all debased coins in the commerce of the Christian Church. If so-called Congregational churches depart from these principles, then other churches will espouse them. The principles will triumph, even though the Romanists are forced to become, in the espousal of the principles, more Congregational than Congregationalists themselves.

But what follows from all these considerations regarding the future of the Congregational doctrine of the church? In some regards, and from the practical point of view, the doctrine of the church is the most important of all the Christian doctrines. The call of

the Spirit and the teaching of the Word of God organize, vivify, and instruct the Christian Church. The Spirit and the Bible are causes of the church. But a certain reverse form of this statement is true. The Bible and the Spirit are means which the church uses for its self-propagation and edifying. The Bible and the Spirit are for the church: Scripture and spiritual gifts are to the end that souls may be edified and saved. From the point of view furnished by the consideration of the final cause of the kingdom of God in its more practical aspects, the doctrine of the church is the most important doctrine of all. That form of the church which holds, evinces, and propagates the true doctrine of the church, will displace all other forms, and will conquer the world for itself and for Christ. The true doctrine of the church is the true Congregational doctrine, and therefore the future belongs to this doctrine and to the form of the church which evinces this doctrine. The final form of the Church of Christ on earth will be seen in the triumph of the principles of the true church polity.

But let us more closely examine what meaning can save from bigotry such *quasi* High-Church doctrine as this. We are far, indeed, from wishing that the laws, customs, and forms of a certain denomination or sect known as the Congregational, shall transplant themselves everywhere, and organize a uniform fellowship of churches from north to south and east to west. We should almost as soon see the Pope universally acknowledged, if only we could become convinced that any organized uniformity were to be the final form of the universal church. Congregationalists may degenerate into mere sectarians, and indifferent sectarians at that. They may adopt either one of the two ways, which, as

John Owen saw, can never heal the schisms and unite the diverse elements of the Church of Christ. They may undertake to organize another denomination with no more noble and vital principles at the base of its organization than constitute the foundation of all the sects. They may set themselves up as universal umpires of all differences amongst other sects. But endless new divisions and "digladiations" will be the inevitable result. They may cease from the strife of sects, and settle down in indifference upon their ancient reputation for mingled charity and zeal. But the wounds and schisms of Christendom will no sooner be healed by indifference than by sectarian zeal.

Indeed, no human prediction can assert what will be the extent of the formal defections and variations of the Congregational and of all other systems of church order in our own land. Holy George Herbert, in his poem on the church militant, says of Christ and his Spouse, — whom he describes as,

> "Trimme as the light, sweet as the laden boughs
> Of Noah's shadie vine, chaste as the dove,
> Prepar'd and fitted to receive thy love," —

that the course they took "was westward, that the sunne might light

> "As well our understanding as our sight."

Two lines which for a time prevented the printing of this same poem assert, —

> "Religion stands on tiptoe in our land,
> Readie to pass to the American strand."

But this fair prediction he follows with another: —

> "Yet as the Church shall thither westward flie,
> So sinne shall trace and dog her instantly."

The constant necessity of considering these two elements of prediction together — viz., the progress of the church to new lands under the leading of Christ, and the dogging her always thither of sin — makes uncertain all the details of our prophecy. We cannot suppose that those elements in the present forms of church polity, which are accretions and manifestations of imperfection, will abide with the church forever. It would give us as true Congregationalists little real encouragement simply to see our denomination outstripping all others in numbers, *éclat*, and success. The denominational name must not become a rallying-cry with us. It might be real cause for pain and shame to witness our Year-Book swelling its dimensions until it constituted a small library of volumes, with names of many churches passing a thousand in numbers, and of many ministers whose long row of titles still helped to swell the several volumes. The question would, nevertheless, need to be answered, whether all this were according to the true idea of the church, and for the best interests of a church which should be according to the true idea of Christ. We should not necessarily feel any surer of the final triumph of Congregationalism, if we saw the numbers of Congregationalists so called increased seventy times sevenfold, nor less sure if we saw them diminished to one-seventh their present number.

But are we, then, to hold that Congregationalism is a mere abstraction, another abstract title, simply for the reign of charity and faith? By no means simply this. The true doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ is given in the principles of church order properly called Congregational; and the embodiment of those principles in actual churches which fully exemplify

these principles will alone be the practical solution of the problem of a united visible and catholic church. In other words, when the prayer of Jesus Christ is answered, and his people are all one, then there will be no predominance of some one present form of organization, and yet a manifestation in all churches of a unity of life.

And from the point of view furnished by this sacred prayer, let us briefly consider the above-mentioned thought. The unity of the invisible church is always complete and unbroken: it is not the subject of human ignorance, passion, or wilfulness. Those who so mistake one another as to suppose, that, because there is no obvious uniformity between them, there is no real unity, are, nevertheless, if they are members of the body of Christ, really united in Christ. This unity which comes by the hidden tie of a common faith and life in the head belongs of its very essence to the whole of the invisible church. But this unity is not that for which Christ prayed: he prayed for a unity to come, and that unity is the *manifested* unity of the entire church. The manifestation must be that of a real unity in order to be a real manifestation; but the real unity unmanifested is not the entire reality for which Christ prayed. A manifested unity has, however, in the thought and practice of the church, been generally confused with an obvious uniformity or oneness of form. Out of this confusion, used as the minister of bigotry, of ecclesiastical pride and self-will, or of imperial selfishness, have come the schisms and fightings and reciprocal suspicions or denunciations which have broken into fragments the visible Church of Christ. The only manifested unity which remains possible to the church on earth is through the acceptance and embodiment in her

concrete institutions of the principles which we have seen to underlie the order of the New-Testament churches. This manifested unity is not to be reached by putting on the wedding-garment when the heart and head are not ready for the wedding-feast. All those disciples who have simply tried to do formally as the early Christians did have only instituted other sects. They have usually instituted the most bigoted and unconscionable of all the sects. In order to reach a manifested unity, certain principles of the Christian doctrine of the church must universally prevail. Those principles are the principles which we have been considering, and which give unchanging conditions to the changing forms in which the church manifests its life.

The first of these principles in the order of logic and of time is this, the visible church must be constituted solely upon the basis of expressing the real union of its members with Jesus Christ. The church must strive to know all those, and to know only those, as her members, who are members of the body of the Lord. She may never be wise enough to attain the full realization of the end of her striving; but she may never cease striving toward this end. Having thus constituted herself as a visible church by manifesting the unity of the invisible church, she will have answered the prayer of her Lord. But the church is manifested under certain limitations of space and time which will always control her development on earth. Hence arises the necessity for the *particular* visible church: this is the local and temporary manifestation of the unseen unity of the invisible catholic church. We have, then, in the particular visible church a new element of a new expression to unity. This element must manifest its unity with every similar element: hence the communion and fellowship

of the particular visible churches. But the manifested unity is represented in the prayer of Jesus as for an end; that end is the conversion of the world. The visible world is to be turned into the invisible catholic church, and this world-church is to manifest its unity as one visible church; in what precise forms it is not given us to define, but only in such forms as conserve and embody the principles underlying the whole development and manifestation of the church. Such forms cannot include one human Vicegerent of Christ, or one Panpresbyterian Eldership, or one grand National or International Council. All these are either expressly designed as only temporary and imperfect manifestations of uniformity instead of unity, or else are attempts to cast down from his supremacy the exclusive Ruler of the Christian Church. In the day of that perfectly manifested unity, if it come under the conditions of time and space belonging to the present world, the church will answer to this following description. In all places of the earth the gospel will have been preached, and the communities of earth will have been turned to Christ. These local communities of Christians will be walking in manifested unity of each member with every other, without distinction of name, without selfish rivalries, without onerous and invidious conditions to govern their covenanting with one another in church-life. Each community will manifest in all ways permissible under the conditions of our present earthly existence its love for every other community throughout the whole world. The unity of the church will be manifested, and the world will have believed on Christ.

The picture of such a universal and visible communion of individuals and churches is a sweet and engaging picture. But alas! it is so far removed in the future

that our tear-dim eyes can scarcely make clear its outlines. Over what paths for nearer approach to a more clear and ravishing point of view the course of our churches may lie, we cannot tell. If they follow where trod their fathers, and the saints of the oldest Christian times, the way may still be long and tortuous; but its end will be safely reached. We can have no confidence in short-hand methods of bringing in the divine kingdom. We are not invited to bigoted confidence in the superiority of our denomination as the chiefest, most numerous, or awe-inspiring of the sects. We are called, however, to maintain with zeal and love and cheer a special doctrine of the Church of Christ, and by self-denying labors to embody that doctrine in concrete Christian churches far and wide. In this form of labors we may have confidence in real success. A little band of brave souls came to New England in order that they might try the establishing of Christ's Church after the mind and heart of Christ himself. They came not as refugees, but as would-be conquerors of a kingdom. Despite the obstacles of hostile men, and horrid cold, and devastating disease, and gnawing hunger, and piercing scorn, they came and staid in cheer and hope. The nerve and muscle of their descendants shows itself to be getting flabby, when they confess themselves unable to carry the much diminished load. Their ambition is marvellously lowered, when, instead of aiming to grasp and send through the earth the principles and institutions of their ancestors, they simply crave permission to be considered as one of the leading denominations of their native land, or even surrender all effort to carry those principles and institutions beyond the few miles that most nearly encompass the strand on which those ancestors first disembarked.

Let it, then, be the last word and the lasting impression of our intercourse in this great theme, that on us is laid the confessed obligation to propagate in concrete manifestation a glorious doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ. In this doctrine there is liberty and there is unity: there is in it both reason and force. The obligation is laid on us by the hand of Christ in history. In the discharge of the obligation there is safety: for its discharging we may treasure in our hearts an abundance of the Lord's cheer. That quaint, vigorous, and sometimes seemingly offensive, but always honest and really kindly, writer, from whose works I have quoted so frequently, — Rev. John Wise, pastor nearly two hundred years ago "to a church in Ipswich," — shall close this Course of Lectures with his ringing word of command. When the oars with which the rowers move the denominational ark themselves move heavily, let us listen to this ancient voice: "Hold your hold, brethren! *Et validis incumbite Remis*, pull up well upon your oars, you have a rich cargo, and I hope we shall escape shipwreck; for according to the latest observation, if we are not within sight, yet we are not far from harbour; and though the noise of great breakers which we hear, imports hazard, yet I hope daylight and good piloting will secure all."[1]

[1] Churches' Quarrel Espoused: The Epistle Dedicatory.