CONSTRUCTIVE CONGREGATIONAL IDEALS

EDITED BY

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CONSTRUCTIVE CONGREGATIONAL IDEALS

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A SERIES OF ADDRESSES AND ESSAYS ILLUSTRATING THE GROWTH OF CORPORATE LIFE AND FEELING IN THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES DURING FORTY YEARS, AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS MOVEMENT AS A TRUE MODERN DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY FREE CHURCH IDEALS

EDITED BY

D. MACFADYEN, M.A.
Author of
ALFRED, THE WEST SAXON: KING OF THE ENGLISH

LONDON H. R. ALLENSON
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To
THE COMING GENERATION
OF CONGREGATIONALISTS
WHO
AS THE FATHERS HAVE
DREAMED DREAMS
MAY BE EXPECTED TO
SEE VISIONS

It is the fundamental assumption of Congregationalism that the Church is the organ of Christ's thought and will. … The immediately possible is hardly worth living for. It is the ideal that kindles enthusiasm and gives inspiration and vigour to all human effort.

R. W. DALE.

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PREFACE

THIS book falls into two parts. The first consists mainly of extracts from addresses by eminent leaders of the Congregational Churches, bearing

witness to the growth of a corporate denominational sentiment during the last forty years, and defining and illustrating certain principles of development in the life of the individual church, and the fellowship of churches which is generally called a "Denomination." The second contains a study of these principles worked out in some detail, intended to interpret and illustrate their meaning. The main ideas of the book will easily be seen, though they are viewed from several different standpoints, and are seldom expressed twice in the same words. They might be stated thus:—

(1) To the Congregational churches of to-day has descended the privilege of witnessing to an ideal of the Christian Church so

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beautiful, historic, fruitful, and true, that it is worth pleading for with passionate conviction, working for with foresight and energy, and preserving by all the resources of organisation.

(2) Those who understand that ideal best in England and the United States have repudiated the interpretation of it which makes it equivalent to an isolated Independency, and have maintained that the corporate personal life of each Congregational church can only be realised and completed in a full fraternal fellowship of churches; that fraternal sentiment and Christian fellowship are not adequately expressed by words and resolutions, but require to be embodied in methods and organisations which make fraternity a power that can be felt; and that for the expression of the common spirit and sacrificial life of our churches our existing organisations are inadequate.

(3) Large instruments are required for large tasks. As the churches find themselves now confronted by duties on the scale of

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a nation and an empire, and under an obligation to recognise themselves as co-operating witnesses to the present reality of the Spiritual Kingdom which Christ came to announce and establish, it has become necessary to find suitable administrative and executive instruments for the tasks which have fallen to them.

The Editor has found himself repeatedly challenged to explain the meaning of "Organised Congregationalism," and asked by friends to recommend some literature on the subject. The second half of the book is an endeavour to reply to that challenge by gathering together some of the ideas, hopes, aims, and plans which have proved an inspiration to himself in denominational spade-work. In the preparation of the new material, he has had the advice and assistance of Dr. Mackennal of Bowdon, and has much pleasure in acknowledging here the benefit derived from his help and criticism.

For the present purpose it is a fortunate coincidence that the Editor has had exceptional opportunities of seeing Congregationalism at

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work under varied conditions. His boyhood was spent in a large and most successfully organised suburban congregation—a mother of many, retaining close relations with the churches which were her offsprings; and ten years spent in the ministry have enabled him to see Congregationalism as it is in rural England—in a historic centre of English Independency,—and in

one of the few county boroughs in England which has no suburbs. This has secured an acquaintance with Congregationalism organised, unorganised, and disorganised; and has firmly rooted the conviction that at present one of our pressing needs is to rethink our theory of the relation of autonomous churches to one another, and to work out an Ideal of the Church, which can be *preached* because it is an expression of our Gospel, and practised because it is a practical help in fulfilling our duties as citizens in the Kingdom of God.

It is hardly too much to say that the difference between the application of our principles on a high and spiritual plane, and on the lower one of mere convenience, is that on one they are true and potent; on the other, they

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are at best only a half-truth. Our difficulties arise when our principles are applied on the lower and unspiritual plane. Our hope is in the conversion of our own churches to Congregationalism as the highest and most spiritual form of churchmanship.

Experience seems to warrant the conviction which finds expression in these pages that, while at present we are labouring under very serious and sometimes fatal disadvantages, our churches have in them the root of the matter in faith and Christian character, and that a very little in the way of wise forethought, strong leadership, and good administration, might transform our halting paces into a rapid advance, most significant and hopeful, both for the churches themselves and for the future of England.

Chief among the obstacles which hinder this at present are individualism in the pew and egotism in the pulpit; and as both are initial obstacles to the operation of the Divine Spirit through the

human personality and the Church, they are serious enough; but they are not peculiar to our system, and have only been accentuated among us by the misconstructions which have been put upon our

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principles. What can be said against our methods is that they have not always counteracted the self-centred instincts of the natural man. If we can separate our principles from their disfigurements, and reclaim them from the misrepresentations of some who use denominational watchwords without seriously attempting to understand, or work out in practice, the Congregational ideal, we may still succeed in doing justice to the noblest vision of the Christian Church to which any denomination has the privilege of witnessing,—the ideal which bids us believe that the Christ Himself may be incarnate in every community made up of men and women whom He has redeemed—fusing, animating, inspiring them into a living organ of His Mind and Will.

The Editor desires to express his acknowledgments to the Committee of the Congregational Union of England and Wales for permission to use the addresses published by the Union; and to Mr. A. W. W. Dale, Dr. Fairbairn, and the Rev. William Hewgill for the use of material included in the book.

D. MACFADYEN.

HANLEY, *April* 1902.

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PART I.

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THE POINT OF VIEW.

I.

THE addresses which follow in chronological order, have been collected in the hope that they may prove something more than a contribution to a passing controversy. They represent different points of view, and are the work of men who have had experience of Congregationalism under very varied circumstances. But they also have much in common: they are alike in resolutely measuring our churches by the standard of an ideal; and they dwell on the traditions of the past only that they may enforce the duties of the present to the future. They are alike in adopting what, for want of a better phrase, is commonly called the "statesman's" point of view—that is, they grasp the life of the denomination as a whole and try to shape it in the light of the higher politics of the Kingdom of God. They are an expression of that deep conviction out of which the best in Puritanism and Separatism came—that God has a destined purpose for each community of His people to fulfil, and that our most important task is to

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subdue ourselves and shape our organisations in order that, with full and loyal recognition of a similar duty in other denominations, we may fulfil His purpose and deliver our witness as clearly and effectively as possible. They assume that it is possible for us to prepare ourselves both in spirit and method for a more united, disciplined, and organised service of Christ in the nation and the kingdom of God than we have yet accomplished.

In the recent discussions on the "United Congregational Church," a great deal of criticism

has been devoted to showing the impossibility of working any elaborate organisation in churches brought up in traditions of Independency. On the question of principle something will be said later on; but the first consideration which requires emphasis is that no organisation, either elaborate or simple, can be worked successfully unless those who are working it are determined to make the very most and the best of it in view of the purpose for which it is devised. There is no fear lest our ministers and churches may not be able to work any organisation which is adopted, if they are willing to regard it as an instrument put into their hands to help them to labour for the fulfilment of their own prayers for the progress of the Spiritual Kingdom. But without a strong motive and a common ideal, organisation will bring

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friction, and possibly harmful results. If new schemes of organisation come to us as part of a great movement for the consolidation, spiritual quickening, and advancement of churches which are living, working, praying, hoping to see the gradual revealing of a spiritual kingdom in human life, we may be on the eve of a religious movement as great and far-reaching and potent for good as any that have preceded it. But that means that we must all be in the mood for seizing an opportunity, pressing forward with the passion of a great hope, rather than criticising a personality, or showing our own acuteness by discovering points of possible difficulty. To that mood of faith and hope this book is intended as a contribution.

The Addresses collected here cover a period of forty years. Dr. Parker's name has been so closely identified with the recent proposals for a more compact and organised life in our churches, that many have supposed—in spite of his own disclaimers—that these proposals originated with

himself. He has done great service to the denomination by his presentation of the whole case. Indeed, it has never been presented as a whole more effectively than in his second Address from the chair. But some of his proposals had a respectable lineage before they took shape in his addresses. It is important to realise that

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the main lines of the ideals presented, and the perception of the truth which they endeavour to embody, have been growing clearer in the minds of some of our most thoughtful and practical leaders for the last forty years. They have, indeed, an older history than that, as may be seen in Dr. Mackennal's admirable volume on the *Evolution of Congregationalism.* We are now going back to our origins,—as every church must do at some time in its history. The twentieth century is taking up beginnings made in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The doctrine of Independency, as it came to be understood in the eighteenth century, and as it survived in some parts of England in the nineteenth, was really a defensive doctrine. It meant that, in spite of the fact that the members of our churches were unchurched in the judgment of Anglicans, and ostracised socially, they could justify and vindicate the right of their Christian community to the name of a church. That doctrine is picturesquely stated by Dr. Dale in an incident recorded in his *Life.* He was spending a day at Grasmere with Dr. Abbott, the headmaster of the City of London School:—

> "We were walking together from the head of Ullswater up towards Grisedale Tarn, and he asked me, with an expression of astonish-

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> ment and incredulity, whether I really thought that if the shepherds of Patterdale—a dozen

> or score of them—determined to constitute themselves a Congregational Church, it was possible for such a church to fulfil the purposes for which a church existed. To such a question there could be but one answer. Great natural sagacity, high intellectual culture, however admirable, are not essential: 'It is enough if, when they meet, they really meet in Christ's name.' But no one can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost."[1]

This is a valid truth, "*ubi Christus ibi ecclesia,*" but it is not the whole truth. It is not even the whole truth as the founders of Independency conceived it. The recognition of Christ's presence in the fellowship of Christians cannot be restricted to any single application. It is a great constructive truth in the spiritual world which has many results in the sphere of Christian life. Dr. Dexter, the historian of Congregationalism, states Robert Browne's position thus:—

[1] *Life,* p. 246. The story is told by Mr. A. W. W. Dale in a chapter devoted to showing how Dr. Dale combated the "Excessive individualism" of Congregationalists. "Congregationalism in its modern developments—so it seemed to him—had drifted far, and was drifting still, into an excessive individualism," p. 243, *Lift.* See also chapter x. in the present volume, "Development."

> "To all this clearness of conception of the self-completeness, nature, and functions under Christ, of the local church, Robert Browne added an equally clear conception and enunciation of the other focal principle of the Congregational system—which I conceive of as an ellipse rather than a circle—namely that of the privilege and duty of fellowship between all such local churches. Every such church sustains a relation to the headship of Christ identical with that of every other, so that being one in Him, they must be one with each other. As in relation to Him making together one family, their mutual relation must be a sisterly one; admitting no control of one over another, but alway inviting kind offices, and,

when needful, friendly advice and aid from all to any.

"In this respect Brownism has been misunderstood and misrepresented by the great mass of Congregationalists, who have been apt to associate with that term the thought of narrowness and exclusion. Scarcely could there be a greater mistake. Provision was expressly made in the fundamental constitution of the original Norwich company 'for seeking to other churches to have their help, being better reformed, or to bring them to refor-

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mation[1] should need require.' And in his most careful statement he says, 'There be Synodes, or the meetings of sundrie churches: which are when the weaker churches seeke helpe of the stronger, for deciding or redressing of matters;' and again he says, 'A Synode is a joyning or partaking of the authoritie of manie Churches mette togither in peace, for redresse and deciding of matters which cannot wel be otherwise taken up.'[2]

"That by the word 'authoritie' here he meant just what every true Congregationalist always means by it in such a connection—the authority of Christ, the great Head, revealing itself through such advice of His servants, as may be the result of their examination of the facts under the guidance of the Holy Spirit—is made beautifully clear by something which he incidentally says, where another thing was first in his mind. He is giving his reasons for refusing his call to Cambridge under the Bishop, and declares that such a call is not Scriptural, 'for over all is Christ appointed to be the Head of the Church,' and 'next under Christ is not the Bishop of the dioces

[1] *True and Short Declaration, both of the Gathering and Joyning together of certain Persons,* p. 20.

[2] *Booke which sheweth the Life and Manner of all True Christians,* Def. 51.

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> ... neither anie one which hath but single authoritie, but first thei that have their authoritie together: as, first, the Church,—which Christ also teacheth (Matt, xviii. 17) ... Therefore the meetings together of manie churches, also of everie whole church and of the elders therein, is above the Apostle, above the Prophet, the Evangelist, the Pastor, the Teacher, and everie particular Elder."[1]

Browne's *Reformation without Tarying for Anie*[2] is full of the thought of the Church as a means to an end beyond itself; of its relation to the Kingdom of Christ. His reason for insisting on the spirituality of the Church, and its freedom from the civil magistrate, is that magistrates and civil policy "spreade a vaile of darkenes upon the people, and keepe from their eyes the Kingdome of

[1] The emphasis here falls on the true Congregational principle, that what constitutes a church is not so much a local as a spiritual unity; not so much the meeting of believers in one place as the union of believers in Christ. The principle is happily expressed in what is known in America as the "Cambridge Platform." "Although Churches be distinct, and therefore may not be confounded one with another, and equal, and therefore have not dominion one over another, yet all the churches ought to preserve Church Communion one with another, because they are all united unto Christ, not only as a mystical but as a political head (*i.e.* the head of a polity), whence is derived a communion suitable thereunto." Quoted in article on "Organisation by Self-governing Churches for Missionary Work."—*Congregational Review,* January 1890.

[2] Published in 1582. Recently reprinted by the Congregational Historical Society in the second number of its journal.

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Christe." "Goe to therefore," he continues, "and the outwarde power and civil forcings let us leave to the Magistrates: to rule the common wealth in all outwarde justice, belongeth to them: but let the Church rule in spirituall wise, and not in worldlie manner: by a livelie lawe preached, and not by a civill lawe written: by holinesse in inwarde and outwarde obedience, and not in straightnesse of the outward onelie."

It is clear that while Browne advocates the spiritual independence and competence of the individual Church as the necessary basis, he regards it only as the basis, from which the growth of the Christian community proceeds. The Church has life in itself, but not for itself. It is to penetrate, permeate, evangelise, even "rule" the Commonwealth. But it is to do this, not by the methods of force and compulsion, but by appeals to the faith, conscience, and love of men; in short, by spiritual methods.

This is the sense in which Independency was understood in the seventeenth century by the great Independents. Cromwell and Milton and Harrison would have had nothing to do with churches which could not make themselves felt in the life of the nation by concerted action. Cromwell was so far from fearing to trust the churches with advisory powers, that he entrusted

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them with the appointment of the members of the Convention Parliament. "Letters were despatched in the name of the General and the Council of the Army to the Congregational churches in each county, asking them to send in the names of a definite number of persons whom they considered fit to be the members of the new Representative."[1] So the first "National Congregational Council" was summoned by the Independent who has left the largest name in history; and it was charged, not merely with the affairs of the churches, but also with the affairs of the Nation at home and abroad.

The Convention Parliament during its short existence, as might have been expected, showed itself greater in aim than in achievement. The experiment was a crude deduction from the principle that the spiritual kingdom is supreme

in interest and importance. Therefore, it was argued, only those in whom the spiritual kingdom is established can be trusted to "see life steadily and see it whole." The saints should rule not only *de jure,* but *de facto*. Had the times been favourable, and the experiment been made under conditions in which success was

[1] Gardiner's *History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate,* p. 224.

possible, the Congregational ideal of government in the interests of and by methods suited to the kingdom of God, would have had a most interesting trial. Immediately after the meeting of Parliament, Professor Gardiner says, "The temper of the House was shown in a resolution, that no one should be employed in its service unless it were first satisfied of his real godliness; and by a call to the people of God to seek a blessing upon the councils of Parliament. It then invited the Nation to join on an appointed day in a 'Service of Prayer on behalf of those who had been entrusted with so great a burden of Government.' The Long Parliament, in like case, would have issued an Order. The Nominated Parliament had too much respect for individual consciences to do more than issue a request."[1] This is an endeavour to act upon the idea that true government is essentially moral leadership, and implies the voluntary following of those who are governed.

It is generally a mistake to give up ideals because the way has not yet been found to make them effective. They have a right to a more loyal service from those who love them, than a flighty lover gives to a coquette who shows him an angry

[1] Gardiner's *History of the Common wealth and Protectorate,* p. 239.

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face. It would be a short incident in the history of the Churches and the Nation if the next hundred years were to be given to working out the significance in practice of some of the ideals we have inherited. In its application to the upper ranges of influence and National duty, the Congregational ideal asks at our hands both elucidation and enforcement, for Independency of the isolated type is not a complete theory of life and social duty in the Kingdom of God. Our churches have only succeeded in maintaining a nominal adhesion to that theory by generously disregarding it in their practice whenever the call of duty seemed to demand it. A conspicuous instance of their generous inconsistency is the case of Foreign Missions, where for more than a century our churches have maintained Christian activity in a sphere which, according to the strict theory of Independency, lies outside their operations. The members of our churches have done this, not as Independents, but as Christian men and women. The Missionary Society associated with our churches, owes its relationship to us to causes accidental rather than intentional; and our missionaries are sent out with perfect freedom to organise the churches to which they minister as may seem to them best. This, which seems to indicate

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breadth and catholicity, is probably one source of weakness and failure in our position at home and abroad. Our churchmanship is an expression of our Gospel, and if our church life and theory, and the Gospel we preach, have no vital connection with one another, it is bad for both.

What is required now is that we should refashion the statement of our theory—not our

principles—in the light of the experience of the last two hundred years, and endeavour, if possible, to state the relations of the individual to the Church, and of the Church to the nation, to humanity, and to the Kingdom of God, so that there shall not be so many ragged edges, displaying the discrepancies between theory and practice. If we can do this in such a way as to secure attention and respect, the circumstances of our time have combined to give us an exceptional opportunity in the national life.

Of the English-born churches, those called Congregational, including the Baptists, are at present the depositary of the only complete alternative to the Anglican theory of church life. We, like the high churchmen, believe in the actual and living presence of Christ in the Church; we, like them, believe in the realised and conscious communion of every believer with God in Christ; we, like them, believe that God has used, uses, intends to

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use the Christian Church as a means of getting His Will done in the world; we, like them, believe that the Christian life is essentially a life in which men are called into an intimate fellowship and communion with God, a life which finds expression in prophetic and priestly functions, in the sense that the Christian is called to give himself in the service of God to man, and in the service of man to consecrate himself to God, that he may live and work in reverent obedience to the Divine Will as it is revealed to him; we, like them, believe in the possibility of a Christian nation, and a Christianity which may express itself in public policy, as well as private duty; we still cherish the conviction which inspired Cromwell—who represents the spirit of our churches in the nation's history—that a nation as well as an individual may be called to do the will of God;

and we also believe that the life of a church is needed to complete and perfect the Christian individuality, and the nation's life.

But we differ wholly from them as to the means and the order by which the ideals for Church and Nation are to be reached. In naked antithesis, their doctrine is that man comes to God only through the Church; burs, that man comes to the Church only through God. Over against a supernatural priesthood, we set a supernatural—

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that is, a spiritual—society fed by a supernatural life, and drawing on supernatural resources, but at the same time recognising that its nature is in all other respects of one piece with its human environment. We claim no authority, except the authority of character and right reason, no status except that of a common citizenship. Sainthood is for us not the quality of a separate order, it is the spirit which quickens life, and is as closely related to it as fire to the iron which it heats red hot. Their teaching confuses the Kingdom of God with the visible organisation of a church; ours recognises the Church and its organisation only as a means to the Kingdom of God. They lean upon sacramental crutches, by the use of which a man may have some share in the divine life which is shared by the body of the Church; our endeavour has been to awaken first in the hearts of men the immediate sense of the full gift of God in Christ to each, and then to lead men to find out the abundance, and the power, and the fulness of that life, by developing it in all the relations of a Christian society. They have staked their hopes of Catholic unity on the universal prevalence of a sectarian stamp—an order of Bishops—which belongs at most to the sphere of organisation. Since 1662 our churches have stood for the principle that Christians are

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one in Christ, and that to introduce additional terms of communion as a *sine qua non* of Christian fellowship is, in John Howe's[1] words, "highly sinful," and makes the church which does so into a sect.[2]

In this conflict of principles we believe that the issue is with us. As in comparing Christianity with the religion of Pagan nations, we use the argument that the ultimate victory must rest with Christianity, because it alone offers full development to and recognises the full personality of every human being; so, in contrasting these types of church life, we may maintain that the Congregational system is the one which offers the fullest recognition and development for the Christian personality of its members. This is not only so in theory, but also in practice. It is often remarked that Congregational churches, if they be

[1] "Though such additions were in the matter of them lawful, yet the making them additional forms of Christian communion must be highly sinful, as being the introduction of a new Christianity,—Christian communion being of Christians as such."—*Works,* iv. 307.

[2] It is also important to remember that this antithesis in religious ideals involves an antithesis in ideals of national life. In such matters as education, local government, and imperial methods, our churches have become the depositary of the ideals of national life best described as Miltonic—which regard the freedom, order, and progress of the nation as resting on the liberty, moral discipline, and educated intelligence of every citizen. In recent years these have almost ceased to be English ideals at all except to those brought up in one or other of the more strenuous Free Churches.

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true to the spirit and principle of their polity, succeed in making more of the human material which they have to work upon than the churches of any denomination, except, perhaps, the Society of Friends. The Congregational system, at its best, stands in a truer relation to things eternal than the Anglican system. Both ask the individual to merge his individuality in the life of a

communion; but the communion of the Anglican is a politically circumscribed church,— to the Congregationalist it is the communion of saints. The Anglican system claims that the individual becomes a Christian in virtue of his place in the Church. The other means by the word Christian, that a man has found life in Christ.

A community which claims that it has prior importance to that of the individual life, can only justify its claim on the ground that it secures to every individual a fuller development of his individuality than is possible outside its boundaries. This supreme claim to our allegiance belongs not to a visible church but to that community of awakened souls which we call the Kingdom of God. It is only for birth into that community that we can claim that it is the most important event in life next to natural birth itself. In the spiritual kingdom the principles of individuality and solidarity meet in a mystical but conscious

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harmony; and the harmony of a visible church life on earth is intended to be the echo, or reflection, of that mystical harmony and binding of spirits into one in Christ. It is a truer order of things to say that a man can only be fitted for church life by being born of the Spirit into the Kingdom of God, than to say that he can be fitted to enter the Kingdom of God by participating in the life of a church. We believe that by maintaining this order—the order of life—Christian churches can best do their work in the nation, and fulfil their prophetic and evangelising mission. The plea of these pages is that, if we believe in our doctrine of the Church, and believe that it is one which ought to be proclaimed plainly and persuasively at the present time, because it alone gives full and adequate room to certain essential features of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus

Christ, it is our duty to give to it the solid argument supplied by good men as advocates, and the most efficient organisation which experience, ingenuity, and application can devise for its preservation and propagation. It should be understood that whatever methods of organisation are adopted are to be used simply for the establishment, maintenance, and extension of Congregational churches. Societies, leagues, organisations outside the churches, may seem to

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others to offer shorter cuts to the Kingdom of God, but for us the question should be settled,—that the best method open to us is the increase in numbers, influence, spiritual life, and moral effectiveness of Congregational churches. A minister is never more truly the servant of Christ than when developing the life of His Church, except when he is making new channels in which that life may flow and irrigate more barren places.

It is too much to expect that we shall find an enthusiasm ready made for ideals which require to be known in order to be understood, and to be loved and prayed over before their power is tested. We have no right to expect that we shall find enthusiasm ready made for organisations which are to give effect to these ideals. But it is not too much to expect that we can create the enthusiasm for both ideals and organisation, if ministers and members make up their minds to do it. If they are valid they can be seen to be so by many minds as well as by one or two.

We have still a great deal to learn from the "Oxford Movement,"—and chiefly this, that a church ends by becoming what its ideals make it. It is accepted largely at its own valuation; and in estimating the weight of churches, the determining principle which assigns their true importance is that the Church has most real weight which

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makes most room for the present operations of the Spirit of God, and allows for the full effect on human life of the Cross of Christ. The voice which says, "Be it unto you according to your faith," is human as well as divine, and speaks for man as well as God. It is because the Congregational system gives full room to the redemptive and constructive powers of the Gospel to do their own work, that we believe it will ultimately justify its right to be regarded as a more valid, because more Christian, organisation of Christian communities than the Anglican.

II.

The address by the Rev. James Miall, in 1862, is remarkable for its breadth, catholicity, and foresight. It is not printed in full because a great part of it deals with the agitations and perplexities excited in the minds of those who were watching the struggle between the northern and southern States of America.[1] The part of the address here

[1] In editing all the addresses the same method has been followed throughout; everything not germane to the main purpose of the book has been omitted, and the witness to common ideals retained; but whatever could be included in that category is preserved. It is hoped in this way to avoid the presentation of a subjective and personal view of Congregationalism, as usually happens in books and addresses on this subject.

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given is the first authoritative expression, in more recent times, of the desire for more organic union between the Churches than had hitherto been regarded as consistent with Independency. It was clearly the utterance of a man who felt deeply the necessary inefficiency of a disorganised body of churches in meeting the duties and requirements of the England of that time. It was an appeal for someone to show "how, without abandoning a single principle, we may gain firm cohesion and

multiplied strength; how we may learn to exist no longer as comminuted particles, which the wind of events may drive away, but as a whole mass, separate in its local organisations, but confederate in its united action; free from tyranny and free from slavery: a great united co-operating Christian body, having no subordination but to the common laws of a Divine Head."

This was a hope far in advance of the time when it was spoken. The mind of the denomination had yet to grow conscious of its solidarity before it could endeavour to express it in visible organisation. But it was something to have given utterance to the broader and higher ideal; and in some of his hearers the seed sown by Mr. Miall found congenial soil.

Dr. Dale's address deals with the indispensable basis of all constructive work in Congregationalism.

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It is an impressive statement of the significance of Church Fellowship for those who enter it through the experience of the Divine Fellowship, and it emphasises the important truth that such a fellowship is by its very nature magnetic, progressive, evangelising. The address has never before been published, except in a newspaper report, which, however, seems to have had the advantage of Dr. Dale's corrections; it is now for the first time available in a more permanent form. Its insertion here is intended to link the three spheres in which the corporate consciousness operates amongst Congregationalists—the church meeting, the county union of churches, and the national fellowship of churches.

The two addresses by Dr. Macfadyen are valuable as the expressions of principles which he had tested to the full in his own experience, and which governed his own conduct of affairs both as a pastor and a denominational leader. With the

exception of Dr. Dale, there was, perhaps, no one in the last quarter of a century who took a higher view of the possibilities and opportunities and obligations of Congregational churches than he did. And he tested the motive power of every ideal which he made his own to the full extent in his practice. It is recorded that he regarded the normal extension of a suburban congregation as

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adequate to supply the nucleus for one new church in every five years; and this was verified in his own long ministry. He founded and fostered into life one new church every five years, during his Manchester pastorate. It is only part of the truth to say that this was due to his personal magnetism and practical skill in dealing with men. It was at least as much due to the views he held as to what constituted efficiency and success in a Congregational church. He believed in an evangelising ideal, and the addresses which are here reprinted are endeavours to persuade the churches associated with the Union to accept that ideal as a normal part of the Congregational conception of church life. A reference to Mr. Miall's address, which appears both in the paper read in 1871, and again in another address from the Union platform in 1878, shows how deep an impression the spirit and aim of that address had made upon his mind.

Dr. Mackennal's address is prophetic, and interesting in the light of more recent events. Like Mr. Miall's, it was before its time, as far as immediate effect is the object of such an address. But it was the expression of some of those deeper currents of feeling and thought which, as the speaker himself urges, were bound to come to the surface: and events have verified his instinct

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and judgment. In the stress which he lays on the evangelising principles of Congregational churches, the relation of the churches' life to denominational organisations, their duty in populous church-deserted centres, and in his emphasis on the principle that the Christian life cannot be perfected except in wide fellowship and association, he indicates the lines on which the true development of the denominational life will no doubt take place.

The address by Dr. Berry is as good to remember as it was to hear. It presents in a vigorous fashion the ideal goal of all church life, and makes a plea for shaping the present course with a view to the ultimate goal. It has the stamp of that higher statesmanship which comes not merely from acquaintance with the plain facts as any man may see them, but from the habit of seeing those facts in their ultimate and spiritual relations and sequences; and it states clearly the relation of the churches to the governing ideal of their Founder. When once the churches have grown accustomed to measure their efficiency by their success in realising and extending the spiritual kingdom, they will recognise that every other standard is irrelevant.

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III.

It may be of service to draw attention to some of the points of view which are found in common in these addresses:—

1. It is important to distinguish between the spiritual autonomy and the independence of a church. The failure to make this distinction confuses much of the discussion on the future organisation of our churches. The independence

of a church may be taken to mean its entire freedom from all external relations with other churches. The spiritual autonomy of a church means its freedom from such control as is not in its nature spiritual. In witnessing for the spiritual competence of the individual church, our fathers were doing a most important service both to humanity and to the Christian Church. They were maintaining that the life which is united with God in Christ is the highest possibility for human nature; that it has its own laws of development, and must be allowed to develop without the interference of authorities which originate on a lower plane. They were maintaining the supremacy, the dignity, the authority of the religious consciousness for all in whom it had been awakened.

The position taken by the fathers of Inde-

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pendency is axiomatic. To those who know what it means, the religious consciousness instructed by Christ is the supreme authority, and cannot allow its place to be challenged by any other. It may be long before the significance of this witness is fully understood and recognised, but there is no doubt that ultimately it will be recognised as the only adequate statement of the case. It is not inconsistent with this position that for administrative purposes, and as an organ of effective and developing life, the churches require a Council with authority to execute its own decisions in certain spheres specified by the churches. The Crown rights of the Redeemer are not infringed by such a step, but an efficient administrative department is added to His dominion. The spiritual autonomy of the churches is the autonomy of the Spirit in the churches. And it is the only supposition consistent with reason and faith, that causes and duties which have commended themselves for any length of time to the conscience and spiritual

judgment of a Council representing the Congregational Churches will, sooner or later, and when properly presented, commend themselves also to the members of those churches.

2. Throughout the addresses it will be noticed that the Congregational polity is construed as a potency and not an impotence. It is very common

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to hear even prominent leaders in our churches say, "We cannot do this or that without sacrificing our Independency." The appeal which is made for the Congregational Church in these addresses is that it is the most potent of all church ideals, because it is the most adaptable. It is in the Kingdom of God what the cell is in Nature—the discovery of the indispensable unit out of which all possible vital forms may be organised. As in the case of the cell, the wonder of the discovery is its extreme simplicity. The Shepherds of Patterdale meeting by twos and threes, with the presence of Christ consciously in their hearts, may make a church. The church may meet in the upper room of a city dwelling, in the parlour of a cottage, or the kitchen of a hall; it may be organised in the cabin of the *Mayflower,* or on the deck of the *John Williams*; but also, as in the case of the cell, it belongs to the very essence of the church, that out of it may come similar bodies, not divided, not separated, but forming part of a larger whole; and that, as it develops, there will come a gradual differentiation of function which will make an organic whole, an organism of a higher type, and capable of a more perfect life than the original from which it sprang. To deny this would be to deny to the spiritual life powers of development which are found in every other form of life; to

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affirm it is merely to recognise facts verified on every page of the history of our churches.

3. Emphasis is laid in all these addresses on *Constructive* Ideals. The movement which they represent, and which will no doubt sooner or later culminate in a higher organic life than seems possible to us to-day, is one which has come, not to destroy, but to fulfil, or to destroy only by fulfilling. The materials at hand are to be used, but the completed whole is to be a more enduring and natural dwelling for the Spirit of Holiness and Love than our present "tabernacles." It ought to be possible, without interfering with anything which makes for the spiritual effectiveness of our churches, to build them into a unity which shall not extinguish their individuality, to make them, much more than they ever have been, parts of one body, related as companies in an army by their common obedience to the discipline and command of one general.

Indeed, it is a fallacy which experience has challenged on every point, that there is any necessary connection between an independent, and sometimes squalid, struggle with poverty, sordid anxieties about income, uncertainty about the prospects of old age, and spiritual efficiency in the church or the ministry. In many cases men are able to turn all these to profit in

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Christian character; but in far more than are ever publicly known or recorded, the spiritual vigour of ministers, and the Christian activities and religious vitality of Congregational churches, are sacrificed by careless business management, by the want of knowledge which comes from working in isolation, and from the pressure of small irritations and anxieties, which are un-

hallowed because it is felt that they might be avoided by a little knowledge and skill and good temper. The more automatic and systematic life in its lower ranges is made, the more strength and freedom there is for development and progress in the higher ranges.

This is the reply to those who speak of the appeal for a Sustentation Fund, a Superannuation Fund, a National Congregational Council, and the consideration of the terms of fellowship between churches as "mere matters of organisation." It would be as reasonable for the soul to speak of "mere matters of the body." So long as the soul can only operate and express itself through the body, it cannot be a matter of indifference to the soul what kind of body it has. If it be a strong and wise soul, it will be constantly building up the body in wisdom and strength.[1]

[1] A quotation from Whitman, which in the original refers to individuals, expresses exactly the truth which is here applied to the

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It is true that a soul may live and triumph over manifest infirmities and deficiencies; and this is very much what the Congregational ideal has done with its very defective organisation for more than two hundred years. But it is a plain duty to give the energetic spirit a sound and healthy body as far as may be; part of the duty which our churches owe to the principles and ideals they inherit, is to give to them the solid assistance of an effective business management and practical organisation. There are few forms of achievement which make higher demands on spiritual genius and Christian character than really successful organisation. It implies a clear sight of first principles, and a vigorous grasp of details, great faith, unfailing charity; power of self-discipline and self- forgetfulness; an imagination almost

dramatic in its power of thinking from the point of view of others first, that it may work through them afterwards. Ecclesiastical organi-

body of churches. He speaks of being "impatient of the folly of the long prevalent belief that it is because of the greatness of the spirit that it has learned to despise the body, and to ignore its influences; knowing well that it is, on the contrary, just because the spirit is *not great enough,* not healthy and vigorous enough, to transfuse itself into the life of the body, elevating that and making it holy with its own triumphant intensity; knowing, too, how the body avenges itself by dragging the soul down to the level assigned to itself." A charter of organised Congregationalism could not be better expressed.

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sation has a bad reputation, not because it is organisation, but because it is so often bad organisation, carried out by inferior men for their own ends. The cure for that is not to have none —which is impossible—but to have it as good of its kind as it can be made, and to insist on securing fine intellects and noble spirits in this part of our work.

The very fact that we recognise the spiritual life as a life having its own laws and principles, ought to help us to recognise that finance has its own laws and principles also; that organisation, whether in a church or elsewhere, must be judged as organisation, and estimated by its results. It is only by covering the meanness of our performances with the magnificence of our principles that we can hide from ourselves the extraordinary inefficiency of our present methods, judged as a method of conserving, continuing, and extending the life of Christian communities.

4. The authors of these addresses take a common standpoint with regard to the relation of the Churches to the organisations which grow out of them. They recognise that the essence of the Church is the fellowship and communion of

believers in Christ,—that this is a far greater and more potent existence than any of the

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systems of organisation which have to control its development As Dr. Mackennal puts it—[1]

> "If it be recognised that the government of each particular church is in its membership, we may adopt diocesan or connexional methods of administration not only without mischief, but even with the best results. Only it must be borne in mind that the representatives of the churches have administrative functions only; the government of the particular churches is not even for recurrent or special periods vested in them; they are constituted simply to fulfil the special charges committed to them."

The same idea is expressed in the address on the "Ideal of the Christian Church"—[2]

> "If we realised our ideal, with what holy ingenuity should we improve our methods. We should make a theory of development and a theory of adaptation. Give the power of determining such matters to the congregation of faithful men and not to the priesthood, and there is no limit to the adaptations which we can make in our churches. So far as methods are concerned, the Church has power to put on institutions when it wants

[1] Page 158. [2] Page 116.

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> them, and to put them off when it has done with them."

The same thought is vividly and memorably suggested by Dr. Berry's famous illustration of the machinery which he saw thrown from the windows of a Lancashire cotton mill and crashing on the stones of the mill yard below.[1] The conception of a stereotyped organisation, and a fixed and permanent machinery for expressing the life, and doing

the aggressive and missionary work of the churches, has no proper place in the Congregational ideal: it owes its prevalence amongst us to the infection which prevails in the neighbourhood of Anglicanism. We ought to be able to shake it off as soon as we choose to realise the "glorious liberty of the children of God." It should be characteristic of our relation to all denominational organisations that we do not live to organise, but can at any time organise to live. Organisations are made for the churches to enable them to do their work better, not the churches for organisations.

5. It will be noticed in the addresses of Drs. Dale, Macfadyen, and Mackennal, that they take common ground in affirming that Congregational principles are truer on a high plane than on a low one. This

[1] See page 179.

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is a truth which requires to be emphasised, illustrated and exemplified in every possible way, and on all legitimate occasions. Congregationalism is just workable on a certain low and negative plane, when the congregation is, and regards itself as, an accidental aggregate of nondescripts. The link which binds them is a topographical or social accident, and they form a Congregational Church because it commits them to less than anything else. On this plane it is possible to maintain a congregation and to achieve a certain modicum of apparent success for a number of years; but it cannot be said in terms too clear and pronounced that this is not the Congregational ideal of the Church. In that ideal the uniting bond is not the accident of residence, but the common experience of life in Christ. A Church is made, not of those who happen to meet for worship week by week in one place, but of those who are continually meeting

in Christ. The purpose for which the Church is formed is that in mutual encouragement, by the exercise of discipline and prayer, by receiving together the Word of God, the members may be perfected into the "stature of the perfect man in Christ Jesus." As it is not the vows offered at the altar which make a true marriage, but the community of sentiment and similarity of ideal, the sympathetic aims and the friendship of the

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soul, which come when two persons share together the discipline and rewards of life,—so it is with the Church; it is not the accident of sharing in common acts of worship which makes a church, or gives it fitness to fulfil the scriptural functions of a church, but the community of feeling and the sympathetic aims shared by the members of the community, the identity of ideal, the soul fellowship which gradually comes to those who share the experiences of the Christian life together. As they make ventures of faith and verify for themselves the truth of the promises of God, the Church acquires a corporate and, as it were, personal life and character, which is an addition to the sum of the qualities of the members. The life of the Church is a real enlargement of life for all its members. Christ is in the midst. He is the common element in all.

This ideal does not prohibit the origin of a church in an accidental aggregation of units. A Congregational church may begin anywhere where there are men and women looking towards Christ. But it is impossible for men sincerely to share life in Christ without insensibly passing beyond that beginning into a corporate life which is filled with common ideas, sentiments, principles, habits, and aims, It is our misfortune that, in

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some cases, the church never progresses much beyond its starting-point as a church. The building becomes a great auditorium to be filled by a popular preacher, or the centre of an organisation of clubs of one sort and another, while the spiritual body remains as immature, inarticulate, and undeveloped as it was at the beginning. Congregationalism on this plane does not inherit the promises or the powers of a Christian Church. It does not deserve to do so, and its results are always disappointing, and its members easily scattered. Men and women are brought to Christ in such churches only to drift off and become the bulwarks of Anglicanism or Presbyterianism in other places.

It is only when life is breathed into the mass of units by common fellowship with the Head of the Church,—only as Christ grows more in each and self grows less,—that the Church discovers its evangelising power, its true dignity as the home of the Holy Spirit, and its efficiency as a centre of radiating influences which witness to the present reality of a Spiritual Kingdom. In proportion as the churches realise that their real significance depends on forming corporate spiritual units, linked by Christ, rather than local units linked only by topographical association, they will become more free to combine for all the purposes

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of the Kingdom of God. The higher development of life brings the higher development of organisation with it. It will be discovered that the same blessings which attend the fellowship of Christians in a single church may also attend the fellowship of Christians, if they are constantly working together under the same influences as in the local church, when they gather in county

assemblies or in a national council. The important point in each case is to keep fast hold of the truth, that the authority of any such assembly only goes so far as it is exercised in the spirit and power of the Head of the Church. In so far as it does not commend itself to the consciences of all men—that is, of all concerned—it can exercise no authority. The traditions of eighteenth century Independency remain as a check on false developments, but they should slowly cease to be regarded as an adequate statement of the normal relations of autonomous churches to one another.

6. The appeal which these addresses make is to be understood as an appeal for advance along two different lines. It recognises that there can be no real reformation except by the impulse of the Spirit of God; but it is an appeal to recognise that the call of God is already in the ears of our churches; that what we need is a sensitive ear to

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hear it; a willing spirit and an obedient faith to respond to it. On the Divine side nothing remains to be done. The grace available, the spiritual resources at our service, are more than sufficient for the demand. The fields are white unto harvest; they wait only for labourers who know how to reap. In this respect the new movement in the Congregational churches must be like every other great religious movement; it must spring from a deepened realisation of the love of God, the redeeming work of Christ, and the spiritual omnipotence of the Holy Ghost; and it must live and maintain itself by the acts of continued faith, hope, and love, by which communion with God in Christ is realised and strengthened.

On the other side, it ought to be different from any movement which we have hitherto seen; for

it will endeavour to conserve and complete its conquests by giving to the Christian Church its true place in perfecting the believer's life; it will endeavour to make the corporate Christian consciousness an expressible factor in the life of the nation; and it will employ for the service of Christ and His Church the wonderful developments of organising faculty, the business skill and administrative ability, and the whole apparatus which rapid transport, the press, and

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the post have put at the service of those who know how to use them.[1]

[1] It is in point here to recall that Robert Browning is in certain spheres the best exponent of the spiritual ideals of Congregationalism with which he was associated. Following Milton, he stood for the ideal of a saintly life which does not shrink from the dust and heat of modern life, but compels these into its own service; "a strenuous acceptance of the world for the sake of things higher than worldly is enjoined by the first principles of Mr. Browning's way of thinking. ... To approach the real world, to take it as it is, and for what it is, yet at the same time *to penetrate it with sudden spiritual fire,* has been the aim of Mr. Browning's later poetry."—Dowden, *Studies in Literature,* p. 239.

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A PROPHETIC ANTICIPATION.

By J. G. MIALL.[1]

IT is characteristic of our Union that we realise by its means, as we realise by no other means so fully, in how extensive a sense we belong to each other. As yet, however, we have gained only a fraction of its original design. It cannot yet be said of us that we present the aspect of a strong and well-marshalled body, ready to defend our position against all comers, and to take a vigorous action upon what concerns the interests of our Dissenting Churches. Nearly thirty years have passed since we sent forth the principles of our faith and order, and voted

ourselves into a combined Ecclesiastical existence. It has taken all that time to reconcile ourselves to our own shadow. We have been *slaves* to the notion of our own *liberty,* and the remembrance of what Congregationalism was in its infancy has, more than anything else, stood

[1] Chairman's Address to the Union in 1862, at Steelhouse Lane, Birmingham,

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in the way of its approach to manhood. We have had, indeed, some ground to retrieve—some errors to correct; but though we have long felt the necessity of some decided advance, we have found it extremely difficult to express our convictions in action.

Ordinarily, our duty is to dwell upon the individual anatomy—too often, alas! the *morbid* anatomy—of religious and ecclesiastical life: we have not been great at grouping our individualities; and thus we have been very far from proving true to ourselves. Even where important counsels and spirit-stirring appeals have been made, we have been supine at turning them to account, and have often remained, like Mohammed's fabled coffin, suspended between opposing influences.

But whilst to promote individual religion is probably our peculiar vocation, in doing so we solve but half the problem of our common Christianity. For, "to gather together into one," is the sublime object of our divine system; and if Congregationalism be incapable of a large and generous union, it lacks an important element of spiritual power; whilst, if it be capable of it, it must needs put forth means and agencies which have hitherto been unfamiliar. And whilst other bodies have their common forms

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of combination, and act extensively through them, is it for us alone to have no concentrated movement, no comprehensive form of church-life? Must our energies always diverge, and never converge; must we be always like a prism to separate, and never like a focus to combine? Well is it for us if we have taught other bodies the principles they have learned to value. But is it enough for us that others "plough with our heifer," or strike sparks of living fire upon our anvil?

The venerated John Angell James[1] says, in a part of his recently published Autobiography:—"The Union, if it has not accomplished all the good its friends expected and predicted, has not produced any of the evils its opponents foretold. It is a question, however, to be seriously considered, whether it is doing all for the denomination it is capable of doing." If this be at all an echo of the public sentiment, it is time to

[1] John Angell James expressed himself more strongly in his "Protestant Nonconformity in Birmingham." "Independency admits not only of friendly intercourse, association, and co-operation of neighbour churches, but of *advisory councils*. Brown recommended them; Robinson practised them; Dr. Owen makes room for them; the Congregational Church at Amsterdam adopted them, and so do all the Independents in New England: and the adoption of the plan by our English Independents would save us many strifes, divisions, and injudicious settlements. The fact is we are *too* independent, and most deplorably need a little more disposition to seek and take advice."—Quoted, *Birmingham Year-Book,* 1902,

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attempt a remedy, and to answer the question, "Upon what terms is it possible for Congregationalism to become a manifested power?" But that can never be till we have learned that Independency is not of itself an ultimate object, but only the means to a higher end.

Let us, however, clearly understand the basis upon which alone we can move. We will not be

impatient of our own system; we will not relinquish one iota of our long-cherished principles, till we have first learned that it is without foundation in Scripture, and in the facts of human nature. We believe in the ministry as an order; we believe in the body of believers as an order too. These are not opposites; far distant be the day which shall regard them as such! We believe it to be essential to the welfare of Christ's Church that both these powers shall be co-ordinate. It must not be that either of these estates shall attempt to trample down or to over-ride the other. The mutual aid of each is essential to the common good of all. We have no desire to be an Establishment. That system is, in our eyes, too cumbrous, too political, too worldly; not prompt enough in action; not sympathising enough with the wants of living men; it does not always fit its times; it is apt to wound the friends it should defend. We have no call to be, in any respect, a mere ministerial con-

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ference. It is certain, at least, that were we to attempt such a thing—after all our protests and all our utterances—we should be abandoned by our best friends, and pilloried for the scorn of the Church and the world.

If we shall become actively confederate at all, it must be on the principle of equal rights and equal representation. But what might we not effect upon such a platform? Our ministers are not dullards; our laymen are not ciphers. What might not ministers and laymen do conjointly in a system which aimed more at vital force than official organisation? Who is that Philip who shall discover for us some Macedonian phalanx? Who shall teach us how cur many forces may be effectually concentrated upon a given and definite spot? Who shall instruct us how, out of our redundance of spiritual material, we may construct

a vessel—we do not aspire to the name of Leviathan—which shall not be tossed about upon every billow of casual mischance, nor need continually to return to port to be re-examined and repaired; but shall be competent, by God's blessing, to breast the waves of the world's wide ocean, to convey safely our spiritual merchandise, or to land our Gospel armies upon some spot of threatened invasion?

Who shall demonstrate the important theorem

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—how, without abandoning a single principle, we shall gain firm cohesion and multiplied strength; how we may learn to exist, no longer as comminuted particles which the wind of events may drive away, but as a whole mass, separate in its organisations, but confederate in its united action; free from tyranny and free from slavery, a great, united, co-operating Christian body, having no subordination but to the laws of a common Divine Head? Till that result shall be secured, we will not forget—it is the part of religious gratitude to be thankful for small mercies—that we have already acquired a fraternal gathering, in which thought impels thought, and not seldom heart responds to heart. And if there shall be something in our ordinary life which tends to insulate us from each other, let us rejoice that there are burning in the breasts of many who thus meet sympathies as warm as ever set kindred minds on fire, and that to excite and direct such influences is one of the important objects of our present assembly.

While, however, we are concerned for the honour and progress of our own body, we do not forget that if we shall have gained the highest point of our denominational ambition we shall not have accomplished all, or nearly all, which the essential spirit of our religion impels us to desire.

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For, whatever be the special truths consigned by Providence to our keeping, and whatever the value we set upon some of them, it is after much more than this that all true Christian hearts are convulsively yearning. The unity of the Church—is not that to a considerable degree a dream of cloud-land? One of the noblest of modern Christian men—whatever his errors—said, in 1839, "When I think of the Church I could sit down and pine and die." And again, quoting from a Greek author, "The bitterest of all griefs is to see clearly and to be able to do nothing."

Many efforts have been made in the direction of Christian union. There were some in which the late Mr. James bore a distinguished part; there have been some on a larger scale than usual in Geneva; yet, speaking generally, and without pronouncing an opinion on these, is it not manifest that the contributions of the Church towards that great issue are very limited and imperfect? Many movements in our modern time have been rather a retrocession than an advance. We love many of our brethren, and they love us; but, taken as a whole, a visible universal Church there is none. Party rivals party—section, section. With the same olive branch in our hands we are at perpetual war. Though we have lived to see schemes which at the time promised success, the

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curse of Babylonish confusion is still upon us, and our experiments are only the attempt to roll upwards the stone which hurls itself backwards again with overwhelming force. Is it not to be feared that some of our brethren are rather rendering their peculiarities more emphatic than relaxing them? And amidst these divisions do we not seem to see Christian love wandering, sad, house-

less, discouraged—as if it wanted a genial hearth and a true home? We can, I fear, as a body, do little to remedy these evils! Each line must, perhaps, be brought nearer to a common level before all the lines can be made to coincide.

Some hope we have, from incidents which have recently occurred, that the time may not be extremely distant when, instead of a forced taciturnity as an essential of union, the body of Christ's flock may bear from each other an out-spoken frankness, so that we may profit by each other's truths, if they be truths, or each other's errors, if they be errors. In this, at least, we may rejoice that the Church is ceasing altogether to look for unity in uniformity.

What remains for us but to look out intently for the luminary, though it may be we shall never, in our day, be permitted to behold it? We can show that we love not sectarianism for its own sake. I think we have already shown it. We have not

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been distinguished by magnifying our peculiarities. We do not make strait gates straiter, nor narrow ways narrower. We may not, it is true, always take the widest possible view of matters submitted to our judgment; we may be often prejudiced, sometimes even perverse. But we admire the good which is not our own; we can estimate gold even when it is not worked after our own pattern. We have never assumed that we are the only depositaries of Gospel truth and life, and we never will.

In the meantime let us cultivate wide views on all that concerns the Church in general. And if the results of union come not in our day, as we begin to feel they scarcely will, let us comfort ourselves by remembering that purity must precede peace; that if we witness not the consummation, we have done all that was within our power to hasten it;

that if we have fought battles for truth, we have never been contentious for a mere party; that we have been always willing to throw our mites into a common treasury; and that we have not caught every passing traveller to observe whether his word were Shibboleth or Sibboleth. Let our praise be, at least, to have "done what we could." "*Amicus Plato, amicus Socrates sed magis arnica Veritas.*"

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THE HOME MISSIONARY WORK OF CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES.

J. A. Macfadyen, M.A., D.D.

When the Lancashire Congregational Union meets, about two hundred and twenty churches are represented. Our system has so far laid hold of Lancashire, that there are few populous localities in which we have not a meeting place. The importance of this statement is to be estimated by contrast with such facts as these. A hundred years ago there were many of our large towns in which a professedly Congregational church could not be found. To-day there are single churches represented here, which probably contain a more numerous membership than all the churches of Lancashire had then enrolled. Even at the beginning of the century the churches did not number more than forty.

[1] In this chapter extracts from two addresses are given. The first part of the chapter is from an Address to the Lancashire Congregational Union in 1879; the second part from an Address to the Congregational Union of England and Wales in 1878.

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Missionary Work in the County Sphere.

The measure in which this Union has contributed to the growth of

Congregationalism in Lancashire will appear from the following figures, drawn from a paper by the Rev. W. H. Davison, then of Bolton, read in 1867:—"That the greater proportion of our growth," he says, "is due to the existence of the Union, appears from the following figures:—Between 1806 and 1827 the Union originated or aided 30 places which are now self-sustaining, 15 which still receive aid from the Union, and 18 which have been given up, or passed into other hands; in all, 63. In the second twenty years, from 1828 to 1847, there were originated or supported by the Union 32 additional places, now self-sustaining, 9 still receiving aid, and 7 which cannot be traced. In the third period of twenty years, from 1848 to 1867, the Union originated or supported 9 places which are now self-sustaining, and 19 still receiving aid; in all, 28. In sixty years, in other words, the Union established or aided 129 places, of which 71 are self-supporting; 43 still receive aid; and 25 were given up." Among the churches thus originated and helped by the Union are some of the most influential in the county. I mention Southport, Burnley, Farnworth, Oldham, Ashton-under-Lyne, and

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Warrington. There have been failures undoubtedly—instances in which the enthusiasm of hope drowned the whispers of prudence; but this is a singularly happy statement to be able to make. If I had had time to make up the figures to this date the case would be stronger.[1]

When the Union was first formed, our fathers travelled over the ground that has been so familiar to us in the discussions of the last few years. There were fears for freedom, fears that the individuality of the Christian would be destroyed, fears that the independence of the Churches would

suffer, assertions that no united action could be successful. The founders of the Union answered these objections like the philosopher who solved the difficulties about motion by moving. Whatever the cause may be, whether it is due to the fact that the early Congregationalist churches of this county were gathered by men who were familiar with the "New England way," a form of Congregationalism which recognises the independence

[1] Speaking in October 1900, the Rev. W. Hewgill, M.A., mentions the figures for the years from 1875 to 1900. These almost complete the statistics given in the address:—"During this period of twenty-six years, 50 churches and stations in this district have been aided by the funds of the Union. Of these, 14 are now fully self-sustaining churches; 6 others have either ceased to exist, or no longer receive aid from the Union; and 30 churches and stations are still on our list; 8 of these were receiving aid when I became secretary, and are receiving aid still."—Ed.

of the Churches, and at the same time their sisterly relationship to one another; or whether it is caused by the infusion of the Presbyterian element; or whether it is due to the native common sense of the people, I shall not pause to decide. There is no doubt that northern Congregationalists have manifested a faculty of keeping rank with one another which has not been developed by our southern brethren.

The names chosen as descriptive of our churches are to me significant. Congregationalism has always been a favourite word in the North, Independency has been the favourite word in the South.[1] At all events our experience proves that there is a possibility of combining freedom with order, that there is no necessary connection between the Spirit of God and anarchy, that Independency does not require us to let things slip, that Christian work may be done systematically, that opportunities of usefulness come to the men who lie in wait for them. Hares never run into the mouths of sleeping dogs. A broken

[1] It has for a generation been one of the difficulties in the way of Congregational development, that the two strains of tradition which meet in our churches do not fully understand one another; and especially that many London Congregationalists have had little or no experience of the happy co-operation and fellowship between Congregational churches which have characterised the denomination chiefly in the North and Midlands.

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pitcher may carry some water, but a sound pitcher carries more. An army undrilled and unofficered may fight bravely under the shelter of walls and stockades; it is a terror to its own friends in the open field. Pentecost did not come until the vacant place in the Apostleship had been filled. God might work without means, but ordinarily He works by means. Congregationalism demands of us in the future the assertion of this truth, not only in words, but in act.

Missionary Work on the National Scale.

God in His providence is summoning our churches now to charge themselves, not with the spiritual destitution of a county, but with the spiritual destitution of the country. Whatever the result may be of the discussions which have enlivened our County Unions during the past two years, it is evident that, just as the old days have gone by when our conventicles indicated that we had good reasons for not wishing to catch the public eye, and new days have come when we erect our buildings in our thoroughfares, strong in the conviction that Wisdom, through us, ought to "cry without, to utter her voice in the streets, to cry in the chief places of concourse, in the openings of the gates"; so in the maintenance and propagation of "our Gospel," the day has gone by when the

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embers must be heaped together that the fire may not be extinguished; and the time has come when we may cast the faggots abroad, in the assurance that they will not only keep burning themselves, but will kindle a conflagration wherever they alight.

We are Congregationalists now, not by chance, but by choice; not by necessity, but of free will. We speak of ourselves by positive as well as by the negative terms that were accepted by our fathers. We are not only Independents, but Congregationalists; not only Dissenters, but Voluntarists. We do not talk merely of Non-conformist, but of Free Churches. We still loyally support the elder societies, founded on a Catholic basis, but we insert the word Congregational in the titles of the societies of later date. The buildings in which we worship are no longer designated chapels—buildings erected to ease the parish church; but churches—buildings that do not regard the parish church as the centre of the religious life in the district. There are fewer ecclesiastical nondescripts amongst us of whom we may say, in the apostle's words, though not in the sense he thought of, "I knew a man, but whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell." We feel that we have a faith and a polity entrusted to us, not only worthy of propagation at all times, but having special adaptation at this

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time. Congregationalist means churchman; the one is Latin, the other is Greek. We are convinced that eventually the choice of the Church must lie between *our* theory of churchmanship and that of the Roman or Anglo Catholic; and that when the choice comes to be made, our theory must be adopted.

As the County Unions are the outward expression of what I have called the second epoch of aggression in our churches, so our Chapel Building Societies mark the rise of the third epoch. Need I stay to speak for them? They have economised money; they have supplied advice; they have fostered, if in many cases they have not inspired, the hope of erecting buildings that otherwise would never have been raised; they have helped to enforce the truth—a truth, which architects say Dissenters are peculiarly apt to forget in their buildings—that the best is always in the long run the cheapest; they have helped to make our buildings attractive to the stranger, and comfortable to the worshipper. More than all, they have wiped away the disgrace that attaches to our name in many districts of the country—that, except when the number of our churches was increased by dissensions, we made no attempt to provide religious accommodation for our destitute populations.

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Our circumstances to-day, however, demand greater energy. Individuals and churches might be mentioned that have earned for themselves a good degree. Many of our County Unions deserve honourable mention, especially since the Home Missionary Society inaugurated its new policy of working through the Unions. Our Chapel Building Societies have accomplished results quite disproportionate to the scanty means at their disposal. But of none of us can it be said that we have done all we might have done. Most will admit that we have been unprofitable stewards. Is not this deficiency due in part to the want of an adequate realisation of the problem to be solved, and of a statesmanlike conception of the best means of accomplishing our end? Might not the Secretaries of our County Unions, now that they

have an organic life, or a smaller committee chosen specially for the purpose, give themselves to the collecting of statistics; to the discussion of the comparative advantages of methods already adopted; the suggesting of new plans, and the dovetailing of new and old organisations, so that we might say that in some sense the ground was being covered?

One advantage accruing from such a general understanding as would thus be arrived at would be, that we should make our aggressive efforts

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wisely. On the one hand, we are not justified in forcing ourselves everywhere. We have not, as yet, an unlimited supply of men or means. Where the ground is already occupied by others, we may and ought to leave it to them. But, on the other hand, we must be satisfied that the occupation is real, and not nominal. We cannot recognise the right of any priest, "whether the word is writ large or small," to draw an imaginary line, and to say to our voyagers when they put forth on their "circumnavigations of charity," "All on that side of the line is yours, and all on this side is mine." We do not admit that the land is possessed when the discoverer has landed, tacked a flag to a tree, and then re-embarked. When, however, the occupation is real, it is not for us to interfere with good work done for our Master. The demands upon our efforts are too many, the labourers too few, the harvest too inviting, to admit of any misspending or mislaying of energy. From town and country the demand comes ever deepening in intensity and swelling in volume. We cannot separate the one from the other, as many propose to do. *Their* short and easy way with the smaller country churches would be to hang them without benefit of clergy; or, at best, to administer the justice which hangs first and tries afterwards.

Sometimes, by way of argument, reference is

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made to the Apostle Paul's procedure in fixing upon a large town as the centre of his operations, and it is contended that we ought to do the same. But it is overlooked in that argument that Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles, and could not do otherwise. Had he been appointed apostle of Judasa, there was not a hamlet which he would not have visited, there was not a village in which he would not have preached. If we regard the Churches themselves, the critical faculty dies down in proportion as we become acquainted with them. Dr. Clifford says, in his paper to the Baptist Union,—

> "Their success is far larger than it seems in the naked columns of a handbill, or from the cold and pulseless story of statistics. These small republics feed the fires of loyalty to Christ, maintain the rights of conscience, build up invisible but real barriers against enervating tyrannies and degrading superstitions, and in many cases keep village life from becoming a monotonous and disgusting corruption. As a matter of facts and figures, they have as strong a hold upon the men as upon the women. Compared with churches in smaller towns, they have twice as large a proportion of males to females, and three times as many as the churches in Birmingham and Notting-

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ham. The well-equipped soldiers they drill and draft off, to become generals and lieutenant-colonels and privates in the town regiments of the great Captain's army, are still due to the village church, though their names are taken off the roll-call."

If we turn from the churches themselves to the work they have to do, we are forced to the conclusion that we cannot abandon the country. "Agricultural England," says one witness, "is the

disgrace of our country." "There are two thousand villages in England," said John Bright in the House of Commons, "in which religious liberty is unknown." "The experiment of an Establishment as a means of evangelising the country," says another witness, "has definitely broken down." "The agricultural labourers as a body," says another, "are alienated from the clergy of the State Church, and the parish church is comparatively deserted." There is need of energetic and systematic aggression in the rural districts of the country.

I am willing to believe, however, that the language held regarding our country churches in some quarters is not to be accepted as meaning what it says. If each committee of our County Unions were to bring in a report to its constituents to this effect, "We are happy to be able to say that our

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coffers are full, as all our aid-receiving churches have ceased to ask for help; some of them have performed the happy despatch in compliance with the request of City brethren; others have been stamped out by the opposition of squire and parson, and the remainder have applied to be received by some sister denominations,"—in such a case, the voices that speak most carelessly of the country churches would be first and loudest in demanding inquiry and in proposing censure. The language we deprecate is due not so much to any undervaluing of work in the country, as to an overwhelming sense of the importance of work in the towns and cities. We have the uneasy feeling that from one cause or another there is an immense arrear due for the past.

In many of our towns and cities the population has doubled, tripled, nay, even quadrupled, whilst the number of our churches has not proportionately increased. The outlying districts have been left to

take care of themselves. Everything has been sacrificed to the maintenance of one central overwhelming congregation. That policy has failed, as it deserved to fail. "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth. There is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." Had there been more generous action on the part of the older churches, new churches would have been

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numerous, and the older churches would have been stronger. But even when that mistake had not been made, the growth of our large towns is the most significant fact of the century. No map serves you for many years. The boundaries between town and country are not boundaries, but waving lines. Each year the invader wins a new empire from the green fields. Here we realise, as we cannot in the country, that the conflict between light and darkness is not to be fought out by angels in the sky, but has been cast down to the earth.

The problem of the day is, can the Christian Church leaven this mass? Can she overtake this population? Can she dig outlets for her wealth, and lead it off to fertilise the barren fields? Can she reach the apex of the social pyramid, and anoint to God those who lead the fashion? Can she penetrate to the base of the pyramid, and purify those who form opinion there? Can she influence the thinker to cast his thought into the seething cauldron of public opinion in the spirit of Christ? Can she baptize trade and commerce, art and literature, into His dear name? Can she preach an evangel more attractive than that of pleasure or money-getting? Is her eye quick to see the jewels hidden in the mire? Have her hands patience enough to grope for them till they

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are found? Is there love enough in her heart to be satisfied with this as her reward, that they are sparkling in the Redeemer's diadem?

I believe that she can do this. I believe that our churches can. Without waiting they might, indeed, do much at once. No one can be familiar with these churches as some of us are, no one can look at the hosts of men of intelligence, and position, and power, who are connected with them, and doubt that "if they not only paid the war-tax, but enlisted in the ranks," the victory might be won. "Would that all the Lord's servants were prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!"

"It is a glorious thing," said Mr. Miall, in the first address I heard from the Chair of the Union, and which has consciously influenced all my ministry, "to stand upon some snow-clad eminence of the Alps, and to witness the summer's sun every-where dissolving the snowy envelope which hides it, causing the crystal fluid to drip from every crag, and to trickle down every fissure, whilst the liberated waters form successively the runnel, the streamlet, the brook, the torrent, the lake, the river, the estuary, the sea, the ocean. But more glorious still is it to see the warmth of a Divine love melting in a Christian community the hard and winter's frost of worldliness and selfishness,

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and setting every individual in motion to take his place, and to do his work, while each feels that necessity is laid upon *him,* as absolutely as upon the drop to find *its* way to the ocean."

Brethren, such scenes our churches may present if we are faithful to the truth we teach, to the polity we love, to the Gospel we believe, to the Saviour

Who redeemed us, to the God with Whom is the residue of the Spirit.

THE IDEAL OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

J. A. MACFADYEN, M.A., D.D.

As members of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, we do not forfeit our right to say that we believe in the Holy Catholic Church. There is a great and powerful corporation which claims for itself alone that august name. Just as it was said of the Holy Roman Empire that the expression might pass, provided it was understood that it was neither Holy, nor Catholic, nor an Empire, so we say of this claim of the Church of Rome, that we may permit the name to pass with the reservation that it is not Holy, nor Catholic, nor the Church; though there have been men and women within its pale of the saintliest lives and widest sympathies—the very material out of which a true Church must be formed.

We claim association with the past. We meet the question, "Where were the Congregational

churches before Robert Brown and John Robinson?" by another question,—the question by which the Protestant so easily silences the Roman Catholic, "Where was the fine flour before the corn was sent to the mill?" We claim as our heritage the entire past of the Christian Church. We do not believe that our Lord's promise has failed at any time; we do not believe that for the many centuries between the era of the apostles and the revival of the Congregational polity, 300 years ago, the gates of hell prevailed

against the Church. We salute all the Churches. We dispute the title of no Church to exist; we reprimand no sect for attempting to live; we only deny the right of any sect to attempt the life of its fellows. Our ecclesiastical temperament is anti-bilious. The Congregationalist cannot but be catholic.

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I.

Why are we Congregationalists?

The arguments commonly assigned for attendance at our places of worship are not perfectly satisfactory. Some are mere prejudices. Many can assign no better reason for worshipping with us than that their fathers went to our chapels

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before them; that the minister is an acceptable preacher; that the building is near, and is a convenient umbrella on a rainy day. We must expect in such cases precisely what happens. The pupil of the eye of prejudice —to use the clever saying of another, although its cleverness is based on the use of the forbidden pun—is a pupil that will not go to school. Such worshippers have the trick of choosing a new harness the moment the old harness galls them. Except numerically, it is true that they are no great loss. Soldiers who allow themselves to be taken captive may be presented to the enemy. But they carry with them all the proverbial bitterness of the renegade. As with the man who leaps from one boat into another, the boats are driven further asunder for the leap; and even if they remain amongst us, they do not add really to our strength; they are

the gout of the hand, of the foot, of the purse of the Church.

Sometimes when reasons are given, good as they are in themselves they are not adequate. We cannot hear enough of our fathers at public meetings and in our private gatherings. "*To them it was given not only to believe in the name of Christ, but also to suffer for His sake.*" We look askance upon the "golden youth" of the

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day who are reaping the harvest they sowed in tears and blood, but will not listen to their story, and will not make themselves familiar with their lives. I can find no better language to describe my feelings regarding them than the words of Hotspur:—

> "I remember, when the fight was done,
> When I was dry with rage and extreme toil,
> Breathless and faint, leaning upon my sword,
> Came there a certain lord—neat, trimly dressed,
> Fresh as a bridegroom, and his chin, new reaped,
> Showed like a stubble land at harvest home—
> He was perfumed like a milliner,
> And 'twixt his finger and his thumb he held
> A pouncet-box, which ever and anon
> He gave his nose and took't away again,
> Who therewith angry when it next came there,
> Took it in snuff, and still he smiled and talked.
> And as the soldiers bore dead bodies by,
> He called them untaught knaves, unmannerly
> To bring a slovenly unhandsome corse
> Betwixt the wind and his nobility.
> He made me mad
> To see him shine so bright and smell so sweet,
> And talk so like a waiting gentleman,
> Of guns and drums and wounds. God save the mark."

But no Church can live upon the past. Men do not wish the pods because they used to have peas.

The rill that detaches itself from the stream of national life becomes a pool, and must one day be dried up. If we are to justify our existence to the men of the present day, we must grapple with the

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nineteenth century problems, as the Puritans, the Nonconformists, and the Methodists respectively grappled with the problems of their day.

Sometimes we are reminded that the influence of Nonconformity has invariably been cast on the side of Freedom. So it has undoubtedly. Our churches have a record in this volume of the world's history, for which we are thankful. The story of to-day is not less bright than the record of bygone years. But liberty is rather an essential to well-being than actual well-being itself. "What will he do with it? "is a question which constantly presents itself when we speak of a man who has gained his freedom. The victory of freedom is only a golden spark from the axle-tree of the chariot of the king; it is not the carriage; still less is it the king himself. When a Church exists only for such ends, it becomes a political party; it is not even a religious sect; it rises or falls with the party whose cause it espouses. When the party has gained its object, it expires in a kind of euthanasia. The Congregational churches have always expected another fate than that.

Sometimes we are reminded that this is a democratic age, and that long before the formula of democracy had been heard—the government of the people for the people by the people—our churches had practised the thing, and that

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to them it is due in no small measure that the name of democracy has been rescued from the obloquy of ages. But then our government is democracy with a difference. It is a democracy

in one sense because it is an absolute monarchy in another. It has no affinity with that democracy which contends that the waggon is to guide the horses, and that the horses are to hold the reins —a government out of whose bosom the most hideous despotisms have always sprung. We are free because Christ has made us free. We are free to do not our own will, but the will of Christ. Christ, and not the individual, is the centre round which the Church gathers. As it is the mother who makes the home, and the king who makes the palace, it is Christ Who makes the Church.

A favourite argument with many is that our churches have been honoured to influence the other churches of the land. This is true. No denomination can have a life like that of a river which sends its waters through the lake, through which it flows, without mingling with the lake itself. But more than that, the other churches—even those who have fed on our honey, and supposed that it came from their own Hymettus—have borrowed principles to a greater extent from us than appears on the surface. Sometimes they have borrowed a

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principle, and, as with the lay preaching of the Methodists, have taught their teachers how to apply it. But if we have no life of our own beyond the principles and usages lent to others, we cannot live long.

Language is used at times, which seems to imply that our special aim ought to be the promotion of Individualism. Our churches, beyond a doubt, have developed this feature of character. Our polity does not permit any one to entertain the idea that he can be saved by proxy. No member can take a place among us without being called upon to judge for himself in many matters. But the individual is only the half of the man. We are

not at liberty to play Robinson Crusoe in the Christian Church. To a certain extent we are individuals; to a certain extent we are social. Valuable as the Church is to the individual, it is not all it ought to be to him unless he feels himself a member of the body whose head is Christ. The Church exists not for the one object only, but for both. Individualism, then, is not an adequate reason for Congregationalism.

By many our buildings are looked upon as "Chapels of Ease" to the Establishment. Our churches are regarded as irregular but useful auxiliaries to the Established Church, supplementing its deficiencies where the Establishment does

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not provide for the growing population, and preaching the Gospel where the evangelical faith is not set forth in its pulpits. This is an honour which we may claim. Congregationalism, historically, means more than the right of the congregation to govern itself. It must have an evangelical soul. The moment the gospel of the grace of God ceases to be heard in our pulpits, and to be exhibited by the occupants of our pews, that moment we are shorn of our strength. Our churches accordingly in every neighbourhood have served as arks to which those who loved evangelical teaching have repaired in days when floods of unbelief and carelessness have overspread the land, and from which they have emerged again to multiply and replenish the ecclesiastical world.

But the Church is more than a preaching station. It has an edifying as well as a converting work to do. Wesley never meant his societies to become churches. They were driven to become churches by the force of circumstances. God gave them the succession which they did not ask. And so it has been with many of our own churches. The reason is not far to seek. We speak glibly enough at

times of "saving souls," as being the work of the ministry and of the Church. Do we think enough of what the words mean? What is "saving a soul"? Is a soul saved because it has put forth

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a few languid desires for salvation? Surely not. What is a soul? It is the thinking, remembering, judging, imagining, fearing, hoping, reasoning, loving, living man. To "save the soul," then, means that the man in every faculty of his many-sided nature is saved. The imagination is to be purified by Christ; the memory to be exercised for Christ; the judgment to come to its decisions in the sight of Christ; the affections to be trained for Christ; the life to be perfected in the name of Christ. This process is begun in conversion, and the Church has, as one of its objects, the beginning of the process. The Church is also given that it may continue the process. Care for the convert, therefore, becomes as important as the making of the convert. Any conception of the Church is imperfect which seems to slight the one object or the other.

II.

We are Congregationalists for the sake of the Church.

Ought any statement of our position to satisfy us short of this —that we are not contending for churches, but for the ideal of the Church? that our churches are an attempt to express the yearnings of the heart of man for the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ,

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and to realise that in outward form? A thoughtful writer has remarked, that to say that the constitution of the kingdom of Christ on earth ought to

include Christians, is not a definite enough statement. Our use of the word "Christian" is responsible for many of the imperfect notions that are afloat regarding the subjects of the kingdom of Christ. The word, I remind you, is not of Christian origin. The name was first applied at Antioch as a nickname, and held amongst the Gentiles the position which the word Nazarene held among the Jews. It is found twice in the New Testament, but never as a word used of themselves by the followers of Christ. Agrippa says, "*Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian*"; and Peter, "*Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man—suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God.*" *A priori,* therefore, we might expect that the name invented under such circumstances would not be perfectly accurate. The word, indeed, might have been worse chosen. It contains the elements of truth, but it does not contain the whole truth. The men of Antioch saw in this new Gospel nothing but a new doctrine; in these new religionists they saw nothing but a sect, such as had sprung up many a time before. The Christians, according to their

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notion, followed Christ, as the Platonists followed Plato, the Pythagoreans Pythagoras, the Epicureans Epicurus. So far, then, as the name "Christian" placed Christ on a level with Plato, Pythagoras, and Epicurus, the name is lamentably imperfect.

To find the truly descriptive word or words we must consult the records in which Christ speaks of His people, and in which they speak of one another. These records describe them as "called to be saints." A Christian, so far as the name goes, might make himself a Christian, just as a thinker makes himself in philosophy a Lockeian,

or a Castesian, or an Hegelian; or, as in theology a theologian makes himself a Lutheran, or a Zwinglian, a Calvinist, or an Arminian; but a "saint" is made, and can be made, only by God. As the buckets placed on the revolving wheel are filled with water when they are plunged into the well, the man who is in contact with the heart and mind of God is a saint; and in proportion to the frequency and constancy of his communion he is more or less of a saint.

But truth is the means of sanctification. "*Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth,*" is the Saviour's prayer. The Tree of Knowledge is on the way to the Tree of Life; hence the subjects of the Kingdom of Heaven are

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not only "saints," but "disciples." Still the kingdom is not built up in the brain. The search for truth divides men. The mantle of truth is infinite, while man is finite. The hands of men, when laying hold upon the mantle, must tug in various ways. Union is reached only when truth is found.

Hence the disciples of Christ are "brethren." It is suggestive of the difference between Christians in our days, and Christians of the early days, that whilst we are surprised and shocked if a Christian falls from holiness, we are not surprised or shocked if he violate the law of love. Even when we offer the olive branch, we deliver it with the force of a catapult; when we drive away a fly from a brother's forehead we use the hatchet. It was not so in the early Church. The heathen spectator, blinded by prejudices, invented and believed all kinds of charges against Christian morality. He maligned the character of the Christian. No falsehood was too hideous, no crime was too great, to be believed. Only one of the Christian virtues was understood; it shone so

brightly above all others that it extorted from every beholder the cry, "See how these Christians love one another." All men knew that these were Christ's disciples, because they had love one to another.

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Upon all this glory, there is the defence that Christ is the band of the sheaf. What the Romanist claims for his Church, we claim for our Churches. We accept his affirmations, only we apply them differently. The Romanist cannot take higher ground than we do. The Congregationalist does not so much oppose as supersede Romanism. Does the Romanist maintain that grace resides in the Pope, and that the Church —meaning by that the clergy—is the conduit of that grace? We substitute Christ for the Pope, and say the same thing of the men whom He has made kings and priests unto God. Does the Romanist maintain that he has the power of the keys? We say the same thing. "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother; but if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church; but if he neglect to hear the Church let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

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Does the Romanist claim supernatural grace for the sacraments and worship of his Church? So do we for the sacraments and worship of our

Churches. "Again, I say unto you that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father who is in heaven. Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."

Does the Romanist plead for his Church that its Head has a right to universal obedience? We make the same claim for the Head of our Churches. "All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore, and disciple all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Thus the Romanist and the Congregationalist stand at the extreme points of the curve. Liberty meets Despotism; Doctrine grapples with Doctrine; Church conflicts with Church. A great conflict is impending. It will probably be the last of all, though it will be the first in which these two systems have met in a fair field. Let the conflict come. Against us Popery wields the hilt without the blade.

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To say that our ideal has never been reached is no proof that our ideal is false; still less is it an argument in evidence that the actual ought not to be brought into conformity with the ideal. Are we to measure the yard by the cloth, or the cloth by the yard? In this objection we find the answer to another argument often brought against us. Puritanism is sometimes accused of discountenancing the exercise of imagination. We are accustomed to reply that there is a strange blindness to history in the charge. A party which produced Milton, Bunyan, and Defoe, and which furnished for two hundred years the

only hymnology that English Protestantism can boast, may confidently appeal to fact for the verdict. But surely the deeper answer ought to be that Puritanism is chargeable with an excessive rather than a defective appeal to the imagination. It demands far more of the imaginative faculty to worship in our simple style than in that of the advanced ritualist. It demands a higher exercise of the imagination to see the authority of the Church reside in the invisible Christ than in a man who dwells at Rome, and is surrounded by a court of cardinals.

We are idealists then. If we err in cherishing our ideal, we err in the best company. In all ages the most philosophical theorisers and the

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most heroic workers have done the same thing. It has been said that every poet must be a Christian. It may more truly be said that every Christian must be a poet. The Gospel is a gift to the imagination. The morality of Christ and Christianity is purely ideal. To this day the precepts of Christ are treated as counsels of perfection. The man who has a high wall to build must use a plummet.

If we err in cherishing our ideal, it is an error at once pleasing and profitable. The furrow may be crooked, but many a full sack comes out of it. Pass in review the great idealists of history, and you see to how large a degree they resorted to their ideal for comfort in hours of trial and sorrow. Plato found an anodyne for the grief caused by the disorders of Greece in his ideal "Republic." Cicero, foreseeing the approaching ruin of the Roman Commonwealth, took refuge in the State of his own creation. Augustine withdrew from the sufferings that abounded on every hand in the dissolution of the empire, and planned his *City of God*. Sir Thomas More, serving a master of

whom he said, "If my head would help him to a single castle in France, he would take it to-morrow," dreamed of the Utopia into which injustice could not come. The Apostle Paul saw the grievous sins and dangerous imperfections in

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the Churches which he had founded at Corinth and Ephesus,—in the one were divisions, quarrels, drunkenness and incest; in the other, he had to remind the converts of the rudimentary moralities: "Let him that stole steal no more"; "Be not drunken with wine, wherein is excess"; "Children, obey your parents in the Lord." Was it no help that he saw the kingdom of God set up among these very men, and could speak of them as "called to be saints," "faithful in Christ Jesus," saints and faithful brethren? The Apostle John wrote his Apocalypse in the stormy and killing times of the pristine Church. Was it no comfort to him that a door was opened into heaven, that he beheld the multitude which no man could number standing before the throne, with palms in their hands; that he could hear the harpers harping with their harps, and the mighty shout, "*Salvation unto our God, who sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb*"?

We have all of us had our moments of doubt and fear for the Church of Christ and for the world at large. We live in times of grave unsettlement. Politics are often separated from righteousness. Industry is often divorced from morality. Literature is sometimes a flood which, unlike the Nile that fertilises all it touches, turns everything to barrenness and to death. Poverty has bitter herbs to eat, and sometimes no bread to eat with them.

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We see practical ungodliness seated in the high places of society, as well as burrowing in the lower. Is it no comfort to turn from it all and to re-

member that one day we shall see a "new heaven and a new earth; the Holy City, the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven, as a bride adorned for her husband;" that one day we shall hear a great voice out of the throne saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men; and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His people; and God Himself shall be with them and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away"?

But we do not err in cherishing our ideal. The illusions of life are not necessarily delusions. Imagination is a faculty to be trained, not to be eradicated. Mere repose is not the great object to be sought in human education; rather, the mind is to be fired by a noble unrest, pressing on to perfection. What life has not some ideal and been the better for it? Imagination is not confined to books and to art. The merchant puts imagination into his business. The architect puts imagination into his buildings; the shipwright into the ships that he sends forth to do battle with the storms

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and with the ice giants. Science cannot dispense with the scaffold of hypothesis. Knowledge will not advance if it confine itself to the results of experience. The highest military genius is fired by the passion for a fixed ideal. The farmer has never yet met with his ideal ox. The mathematician has never yet drawn the straight lines and equilateral triangles about which he reasons. What preacher ever yet preached such sermons to his congregation as he planned in his dreams? What young Adam, what fair Eve, ever yet found marriage precisely what their fancy painted? We

cannot be wrong in putting imagination into our Church life, and cherishing an ideal.

This is not all, however. Ideals do not remain ideals; they tend to become facts. Ideals have no modesty; they must be expressed; they must fight; they cannot rest until they conquer or are conquered. Restricting ourselves to a few of the attempts that have been made to express the kingdom of God upon earth, how striking the illustrations that history supplies!

Hildebrand.

The name of Hildebrand represents the spirit of the Papacy to this day. It is difficult to say whether that name fills the student of Church history with more of awe or of admiration. Historians are never wearied of picturing the features

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of his character and the incidents of his life. Of humble birth, so humble as to be obscure; a monk in spirit from his boyhood; mastering in the most ascetic retreat of the times all the knowledge of the day; possessor of the severest virtue, the simplest piety, and vast theological requirement; of an intrepidity which delighted in confronting the most powerful; of a stern singleness of purpose which inspired his partisans with perfect trust; of a subtle policy which bordered upon craft,—to him the Papacy was the Church of Christ—to exalt it was to advance Christianity. This ideal gathered all his powers of mind and heart into a focus.

This ideal, once conceived, never deserted him. It was with him when, a monk in France, he surveyed the weakness of the enemy's position; it dictated his policy when he was the sole adviser of his predecessors on the Papal throne; it animated him when he set his face against the simony that disgraced and weakened the Church;

it suggested the organisation of the priesthood as the militia of the See of Rome by extending and enforcing the law of celibacy in the clergy. In the prosecution of this design he betrayed no fear, offered no compromise, rent asunder the tenderest ties, subdued his enemies by courage and his friends by reverence. This ideal brought him out triumphantly from his conflict with the Emperor.

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The world still rings with the name of Canossa. Thither the old, withered Pope brought the Emperor, young and vigorous, born in the purple, who could not remember the day when he was not treated as a sovereign,—brought him over the Alps when the very valleys were white with snow and slippery with ice, compelled him to throw himself at the feet of the man whose predecessors his fathers had handled as a tool, kept him shivering in the cold—to use his own words—"cauterising his wounds that they might not heal too easily." He was as determined in adversity as he had been disdainful in prosperity. Driven from his palace, and from Rome, he laid himself down to die, protesting, "I have loved justice and hated iniquity, and therefore I die in exile." His conception of the kingdom of God was very imperfect. The notion that the Redeemer's kingdom can be combined with a sort of territorial sovereignty can only be accepted when Peter is taken for Peter's Master. The means to which he resorted, too, were at variance with the spirit of Christianity as we understand it. The disruption of the family tie, the use of falsehood for truth, the enforcement of his will by bloody and desolating wars, are fatal to his claim to be the representative and vicar of Christ. Yet we must not forget that what he did accomplish rallied

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round him all the friends of Reform in his day, and reminds us of the force that is brought to bear on mind and heart, on will and conscience, by any ideal of the kingdom of God.

Luther and Calvin.

By and by the Papal tyranny could be endured amongst the Teutonic nations no longer. Germany, Switzerland, France, Holland, Scotland, England became conscious of a new life stirring under the ribs of death. God raised up many men almost without arrangement and without collusion, to testify for Him in various countries. But of the many names that shine in the galaxy of great men who then made common cause for truth, freedom, and righteousness, Luther and Calvin are pre-eminent. An unpractised eye cannot see the difference between the two, in the dust of conflict; but a difference there is. There is much more that is attractive and striking in the life of Luther than in the life of Calvin. There is much more romance and event in Luther's history than in the history of Calvin. We begin always with Luther first when we speak of the Reformation. He lit the fire that has been burning for three centuries; in consequence he made Germany the primary planet. The boy at Mansfeld, the student at Erfurt, the doctor, arrested to serious thought by the hand of God; gathering his friends together

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for the last feast, and that very night entering the monastery with his Virgil and his Plautus; the mendicant scouring with his mendicant's bag the town in which he had been known as the successful student; the reader of the Bible coming to Christ, not smoothly sailing down the stream, but through

the tempest of ocean; the pilgrimage to Rome, with the insight which it gave him into the mummeries of superstition; the voice that fell upon his ears, "*the just shall live by faith*"; his discussion with Tetzel and his determination to "beat a hole in his drum"; the nailing up of the theses on the Church with a hammer, every stroke of which shook the Papal throne; the disputation at Liepsic; the burning of the Papal bull "as a few old papers" at the Diet of Worms, are some of the most interesting scenes in history.

There are no such striking incidents in the life of Calvin. There is no heroic confession in the presence of kings and princes, "Here I stand; I can do no other: God help me." There are no touches of humour, as where Luther speaks of his wife as "Lord Kate"; no tender letter like that which he wrote to his little son Johnnie; no strong words like the defiance to Duke George; no triumphant utterances of faith like those in which Luther's talk abounds; no such immediate results as when at the word of this monk the whole edifice

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of Roman superstition seemed to fall to the ground. There is not even such a foil in the story of Calvin as Erasmus supplies to the story of Luther; "no one turning hither and thither like a troubled conscience," "tacking backward and forward instead of sailing into port," "trying to wash the fur without wetting it," or in Luther's own words, "walking on eggs without crushing them." Nay, there is at times a positive revulsion from the man Calvin, from his apparent coldness at home, from his stern government of Geneva, from his apathy towards many who happened to differ from him, and from his share in the fate of Servetus.

Yet history compels the confession that the eventual triumph of the Reformation was due far more to Calvin than to Luther. Luther left the

government of the Church in the hands of the prince. In the next generation Lutheranism coined the heart's blood of the Reformation into mere dogma. It formulated the disgraceful maxim, *Cujus regio ejus religio.* It made no attempt to create a new body for the new spirit. It was content to pour the new wine into old bottles. Had the Reformation depended on Lutheranism, when Ignatius Loyola summoned his hosts to the conflict, the Reformation, if it had survived at all, would scarcely have been found outside a few German duchies.

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Calvin's Idealism.

It was Calvinism—understanding by the word not merely the marvellous theological system which we think of now in association with the name, but the simple worship and the primitive government in which the theology was enshrined—that turned the battle from the gate. Like fresh troops which arrive while the contest is doubtful, it ensured the victory for the Reformation hosts. It settled and held the territory that Luther had conquered. In little more than the lifetime of a single man, Scotland, Holland, Switzerland, England, Germany, and France, each in part emerged to light and liberty. The nations shook themselves as from a sleep, and took on freedom as a garment. The Hollander roused him in his marshes, the German burghers bearded their Emperor, and won their rights. Up to that moment Scotland had no arts but the art of war, no literature but her songs of love and of chivalry. The land was torn by intestine feuds, and oppressed by feudal tyrants. Its soil was uncultivated and barren, its climate ungenial. Soon, under the leadership of John Knox, own

brother to John Calvin, it became a Goshen of heavenly light, a Hermon of heavenly dew. The high mettled temper, the robust and fervid genius of the nation uprose in championship of religion

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and liberty, and out of a fearful storm of persecution and bloodshed its Church at last emerged "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." Whence the great difference between these two children of the Reformation, nursed as they were in the same cradle? Simply here: Luther contended for the Primitive Gospel; Calvin added to Luther's contention the contention for the Primitive Church. He went one step further than Luther, but it was the step of a giant. In other words, Calvin was as idealist. His ideal, according to our views, was wrong in some points, especially in this, that he acted as if he could make men Christians by drawing geographical lines, and calling all who dwelt within those lines subjects of the Kingdom of God. But he was altogether right in planning for the establishment on earth of the kingdom of heaven.

Constructive Puritanism.

Another experiment has been made in the same direction, and with even grander results. We speak of the English Reformation, but when we use the words we use them in the exercise of a large charity. Dr. Arnold used to say of the English Reformation, that we were tempted to "*forget the badness of the agents in the goodness of the cause, and the goodness of the cause in the*

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badness of the agents." It was the confluence of two streams which refused to intermingle. Here

we have two tendencies mechanically united, but never blended into one. The furrow is uneven because an ox and an ass draw the plough. Knox called it a "motley system," a "mingle mangle." It aimed at consulting the laggards as well as the vanguard of the host, and for the most part the laggards were consulted at the expense of the vanguard. Accordingly it became an arrangement for the time rather than a final settlement. There are no such names connected with it, as we are familiar with in the other Reformation movements. There are no such marked results on the national character as those that were effected by the Reformation in Scotland. It was natural, therefore, that men who studied the Scriptures, and who accepted those writings as authoritative, should be discontented. This discontent manifested itself in the vestment controversies. "These, however, were but shafts in the mine which showed that elements of the most powerful opposition were ready to burst forth into a flame. When it became clear that nothing was to be had by their opposition, it was natural that a party should rise taking as their motto, "Reformation without tarrying for any." When they could not realise their conception of the Kingdom

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of God in England and in Holland, it was natural that they should turn to the Western hemisphere.

The story of the *Mayflower* has often been told, but the moral of that most beautiful and pathetic page in the volume of Church history is very frequently missed. Mrs. Hemans speaks of the Pilgrim Fathers as seeking "freedom to worship God." In one sense they were not seeking freedom to worship at all; in another sense that statement only covers part of the case. Their minds were fascinated by the thought of establishing a Church and erecting a State, in accordance with the mind

of God, on another shore. It was because they desired to accomplish this that they were fondled with buffets and patted with eagle's claws at home. It was in the hope of accomplishing this, that the Separatists of Scrooby and the exiles of Leyden became the pilgrims of the *Mayflower.* It was as a Church, and not as individuals, that they smuggled themselves out of England. It was as a commonwealth, and not as individuals, that they landed on Plymouth Rock. They were no mere political refugees. They had not considered the question whether the government of Holland was better than the government of England. They had no new scheme of Christian doctrine to propound. What they had received was a new idea of the kingdom of God upon earth. From

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the moment they landed, the Christian Church in its simplest form was planted in the New World, and the Christian state followed the Christian Church. They, too, made mistakes in realising their ideal. They confounded the civil and the sacred. They employed the power they possessed for the forcing of conscience; but the Churches which they founded and the State which they established are to be seen to-day in the great Republic of the West. The seedling of the *May-flower* has become the giant oak of the forest.

Congregational Idealism: its Practical Side.

Now by *our* independent thought upon these subjects, as well as by our study of the mistakes which our Predecessors have made, we have come to stable conclusions as to the nature of the kingdom of God upon earth. Our individual Churches are attempts at embodying these conceptions. We study the large letters

that we may be the better able to write the small letters.

It is true that it is no argument against a high ideal of the kingdom of Christ that it is imperfectly realised. Nothing divine can pass through human hands which is not deteriorated by the process. The stream takes the colour of the soil through which it flows. The objection that our Churches make many mistakes, and are guilty of many

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offences, is true as a statement of fact; but it is not true as an explanation of a cause. We should make fewer mistakes, we should be guilty of fewer offences, if we had more Congregationalism rather than if we had less; if our Churches, in fact, corresponded to our ideal, there would be no mistakes and no offences.

Yet we do wrong to our ideal when we fail to bring the actual into agreement with it. The loftiest imagination and the lowliest common sense ought always to be on the same side. That we guide our steps by the stars is no reason for walking into the puddles. If we visit the sun, it is not that we may lose our eyes. And here in England it is unpardonable to forget this. Our countrymen, as a rule, are not idealists in anything. No men in the world are more forward to remind us that a claim can never constitute a fact. Emerson says truly of us, that while there is nothing which Englishmen hate so much as a theory, they will bow down and worship a fact. This is a weakness of our national character. Without impulse, without enthusiasm, without ideals, the world cannot live. Devout imaginations, at which so-called "practical" men like Maitland have shrugged their shoulders, have proved in the hands of idealists, like John Knox, the salvation of men and of peoples. The ship needs the wind

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that is to fill the sails as well as the pilot who is to handle the helm. There is a place in the mental world for the intellect that digs up the gold of truth as well as for that which casts it and moulds it, and turns it into current coin. It is false philosophy to say with the Megaric school that an architect has no power to build a house till he has built it. The Quaker may be wrong when he says to the new parson, "I will not call thee 'Reverend' until I see whether thou deserve it." Still it is only by proving practically to England at the present time that our Churches can do the nation's work, that we shall persuade her to accept our ideal. When we have done the best we can in argument, "the argument, like a coy maiden, puts on a veil, and turns down another road."

At this moment England is hesitating about disestablishment because she is not convinced that the free Churches of the country are competent to supply the religious needs of the people. Edward Miall and the founders of the Liberation Society might not only have brought their hosts out of the land of bondage, led them through the wilderness, and seen for themselves the goodly land afar off, as they did, but they might have crossed the Jordan, they might have beheld the hosts settled in Canaan but for this hesitation on the practical side. So far as argument is concerned, we have

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held the ground for twenty years. Our logical batteries have sent forth a deadly hail before which no forces of the enemy have been able to stand. Earl Russell once defended the Irish Establishment on the ground that it provided a family in every parish to eat the farmer's eggs and drink the farmer's milk. The popular argument applied in our days in defence of the

English Establishment is that it provides a gentleman in every parish to teach good manners. The Irish Establishment went its way in spite of Earl Russell's egg-and-milk argument; and the English Establishment will go its way in spite of the gentleman-in-every-parish theory. What is the explanation of the hesitancy of our countrymen? Why does England not close at once with our ideal? Simply because, in Luther's homely words, England does not like to part with one pair of shoes until she has found another pair. And I do not see that we can blame men for acting thus who do not profess to hold spiritual views of the nature of the kingdom of Christ. I am not sure that we ought to ask them until we can justify our faith by our works.

Many of you may remember how Henry Rogers enforced the necessity of practical work by way of counterbalancing the undue stimulus imparted by the imagination to the emotions. He is writing to

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a young lady on novel reading, and after illustrating the important principle in human nature so well expounded by Bishop Butler—that, from our very faculty of forming habits, passive impressions by being repeated grow weaker, whilst practical habits are formed and strengthened by repeated acts—he proposes to his young correspondent that she should keep a debtor and creditor account of sentimental indulgence and practical benevolence. "I do not care," he says, "if your pocket-book contains some such memoranda as these: 'For the sweet tears I shed over the romantic scenes of *Charlotte Devereux,* I sent three basins of gruel and a flannel petticoat to poor old Molly Brown. For sitting up three hours beyond the time over the *Bandit's Bride,* gave half a crown to Betty Smith. My sentimental agonies over the pages of the *Broken*

Heart cost me three visits to the Orphan Asylum and two extra hours of Dorcas Society work. Two quarts of caudle to poor Jobson's wife, and some gaberdines for his ragged children on account of a good cry over the *Forsaken One*.'" Might not some such tariff be instituted for all of us, with the view of carrying out our ideal? "For every clap of approval at the Union meetings of eloquent speeches regarding our fathers and their noble work,—sent £5 to the Jubilee Fund. For

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every assertion that Congregationalism is the primitive method of Church government,—devoted a day to County Union work. For every emotion of gratitude that we stand in such a noble succession as Nonconformists,—gave three hours to setting the Church's accounts right. For every pamphlet devoted to prove that we are always in the right and our opponents always in the wrong,—spent hours in writing letters to enforce the claims of the Church Aid Society.

Realising the Ideal.

Brethren in the ministry, if we attempted practically to realise our ideal, what labour we should put forth that souls may be saved! Ought not "grain" to fall before our sickles wherever we go?

Have we such an ideal to realise? Then does it not ennoble our whole work? Who of us will dare to say, "I will not throw myself away upon any place"? What better throw could anyone make than throw himself away for men, for whom Christ gave up Himself?

Is this our ideal? What students we should be —passionate men, tormented by the truth. What sermons we should preach! now driving the truth home by the closed fist of logic, and again by the

open palm of rhetoric; now presenting truth in a nut-shell, and again in a bomb-shell.

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Is this our ideal? What a new ardour we should infuse into our lives, making everything subordinate to our work! What diligence we should exemplify, what self-sacrifice, what fore-thought! What energy would be too great to exercise? what detail would be too little, what visit too unimportant, what engagement too contemptible? Even keeping of accounts and correction of minutes would assume the highest importance, if done to realise our conception of the Kingdom of God.

What stimulus ought this ideal to impart to the members of our churches! No one can read the Epistles of Paul without coming to the conclusion that as yet we have scarcely grasped the possi-bilities of ministry that are latent in our churches. In the Epistle to the Romans, Paul speaks of gifts differing according to the grace given—prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, showing mercy. In the Epistle to the Corinthians he enumerates the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, the gifts of healing, the working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, divers tongues, interpretation of tongues. As we read we feel that the doctrine of the priesthood of believers opens to us in our day a broad land of unknown wealth, which we have not as yet even surveyed. Whilst we all can see that it is foolish

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to place over a church a man of feeble power and limited attainments, that it is fatal to set a man at the fountain-head of things in a church who is not loyal to Christ, that there is and that there must always be a difference between the ordinary labourer and the skilled workman, is it not plain

that if Christianity is ever to lay hold upon the nation, the Spirit of God must descend upon the Churches of the present day, as He did in the early days?

If we realised our ideal, what might we not do? It would be like the breath of spring which melts the ice of the lengthened winter, and is felt from the shore of the sea to the top of the mountain. Where are there men of higher influence and more gifted minds than we know of in our churches? Why should they hold themselves cooped up within the citadel when they might be leading bands of skirmishers and essaying conflict all over the plain? The fault is with us, not with our ideal. Its language is that of Moses when Eldad and Medad prophesied in the camp: "Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them."

If we realised our ideal, with what holy ingenuity should we improve our methods! We should make a theory of development

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and a theory of adaptation. Give the power of determining such matters to the congregation of faithful men, and not to the priesthood, and there is no limit to the adaptations we might make in our churches. So far as methods are concerned, the Church has power to put on institutions when it wants them, and to put them off when it has done with them.

We are not contending as Congregationalists for a human sect, but for the ideal of the Church of Christ. At present, does not this fact seem all but forgotten amongst us? Radicals as we boast ourselves to be in politics and on social questions,is there anywhere to be found more intense Conservatism than sometimes prevails amongst us regarding the methods of our church life? "Every church has

a right to organise in its own way," we say aloud, but then we add in a whisper, "it must be in the old way." Too often we are the "ossified children of a flexile parent." We quote Robinson's words, the words which he used probably of polity, and apply them to everything else but polity. We glide into routine. We degenerate into habit. The inspiration of former ages becomes the bondage of the present. Our liberty is hampered by self-constituted judges. The forms in which the protests of former days were made become anvils on which we forge new fetters for our-

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selves. The youth of Congregationalism hinders the development of its manhood. We are slaves to the notion of our own liberty. Our train has many brakes, and little steam. The best is the enemy of the good. We cannot plough with horses, we must have recourse to oxen, and therefore we will not plough at all.

Addison, in his *Spectator,* when speaking of Sir Roger de Coverley, tells how he used to describe with a good deal of mirth his first coming to his estate. He found three parts of his home altogether useless. The best room had the reputation of being haunted, and for that reason was locked up. Noises had been heard in the Long Gallery, and no servant would enter it after eight o'clock at night. The door of one of the rooms was nailed up because a butler had hanged himself in it. His mother, who lived to a great age, had shut up half the rooms in the house because her husband, her son, or her daughter had died in them. "The knight, seeing his habitation reduced to so small a compass, and himself in a manner shut out of his own house, upon the death of his mother ordered all the apartments to be thrown open and exorcised by his chaplain, who lay in every room, one

after another, and by that means dissipated the fears which had so long reigned in the family."

Is not this a parable of what we are, a hint of

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what we ought to do? We have a noble house to live in; it is the heritage of the Lord who bought us. All things are ours, yet we shut up room after room, and confine ourselves to one or two apartments. A ghost has been seen in one room, and somebody says that somebody else told him that his father saw a ghost in another. Surely this is reducing Congregationalism to the level of a sect, and forgetting that it sets forth the ideal of the Church of Christ.

Why not avail ourselves of our freedom? If there is anything in the thought of one section of the Church of Christ, why should we not try to fit it into our thought? Some one has said that there are no "isms" in the Bible. It is more correct to say that all the "isms" are in the Bible. If from the Episcopalian we can gather hints for worship in our congregation, is it enough to answer, "You are leading us to Rome"? If our Wesleyan brethren can teach us in the country districts how to group our churches, to call forth our lay preachers, and by system to lighten the burden which presses so heavily on our ministers, ought we to dismiss the suggestion by saying, "Wesley was an Arminian"? If every profession assures us that men are better for serving an apprenticeship, that workmen ought not to begin cutting wood before they have felt the edge of their

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tools; if it be true that there is a knack in every art, which is not a gift, but comes by use, ought our students to be hurried out from the cloister into the Church without preparation; and ought we to be frightened from the idea of ministerial

apprenticeship by the cry of "Curates"? If our Presbyterian brethren can teach us a lesson as to the organisation and pastoral oversight of our congregations, need we be frightened by the cry of the "Solemn League and Covenant"? If we are minded to open schools and halls, and break the reign of monotony in our evangelistic work, ought we to be hindered by the cry, "The Salvation Army does the same thing!" If it be true that pew-rents hinder the growth of some congregations, it is no argument that the Ritualists as a body prefer the offertory. If men of taste tell us that we use unintelligible English, that sometimes they scarcely can catch our meaning when we speak, does loyalty to our ideal demand persistence in the usage? Asceticism in worship was the only method by which the Puritans could emphasise their protest; but are we not, with the changing aspects of our warfare, to change our weapons? There is no limit to the power of adaptation which our system possesses. We are not faithful to our ideal if we do not avail ourselves of this power.

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III.

We are Congregationalists for the sake of the Nation.

Sometimes the taunt has been levelled against us that Nonconformists are only "half Englishmen." If patriotism consists m the belief that any Englishman can beat ten foreigners, we are not patriotic after that fashion; but if patriotism means that all the interests of England are dear to us, then we resent the accusation as unjust and an unfounded calumny. It has been reserved for a Roman Catholic nobleman to say that he was first a Catholic and then an Englishman. The shock felt by

that statement, and the indignation excited by the taunt levelled against ourselves, illustrate how remarkable and decided the growth of national feeling is in Christendom. There have been times in the history of the Christian Church when, to a Christian, his nationality was nothing compared with his Christianity. Just as in the days of conflict between Athens and Sparta, a member of the democracy sympathised with Athens, even against the interests of his native city, and a member of the Oligarchy against the interests of his native city, so to the Christian of the first age, and in a less degree, of the Protes-

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tant Reformation period, his Church was of more importance than his country. Now, however, it is different. It is felt by Christians everywhere that their country is dearer to them—not than their Christianity, but dearer to them than any particular religious organisation. If the representatives of any Church take a stand in opposition to the national well-being, the Church, and not the nation, must go to the wall. A patriotic Bavarian celebrates with rejoicings the anniversary of Sedan, though the Roman Catholic Church tells him he ought to mourn. A French Protestant mourns, though the loss to his country was a gain to freedom. Lord Denbigh may style himself a Catholic first and an Englishman afterwards; but few of our Catholic families would act on such a principle. Even in Elizabeth's time the mass of Catholics were patriotic enough to arm against the Armada During the late civil war in America, most of the Churches divided into Northern and Southern, and though the Union was preserved, the Churches have been in no haste to reunite. Had Secession succeeded, every Church would have gone with its country, or would have experienced the fate which the Episcopal Church

in the United States passed through last century, being all but blotted out of existence in consequence of its sympathy with Great Britain. A

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Church that does not understand this, that does not sympathise with the genius of the people, that does not make the welfare of the people its own concern, cannot live.

Is Congregationalism able to meet the Religious needs of a Nation?

We maintain that Congregationalism can do national work. It is assumed by many that the national Church must be governed and ruled the State. This we deny. A national religion is a solecism in that sense. The Spirit of God regenerates by units; but He can regenerate all the units. We may be right or wrong in this; we contend, however, that according to this theory the nation can become Christian, Congregationalism has made one nation. If Puritan Presbyterianism may boast of Scotland, Puritan Congregationalism may boast of New England. It has only once had the chance of laying the foundation of a nation, but it has nobly wielded its opportunity. It has made New England an intellectual garden; it has covered it with busy markets, with schools, and colleges, and universities: it has adorned it with order and liberty, with moral progress and mental activity, religious sensibility, and large-hearted liberality. It has produced gifted women and heroic men to illustrate what our Churches could have done in

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England for the nation if they had had a similar chance.

Even as it is, here our Churches have done more than their share in the manufacture of the England of the present day. Their loss would be seriously felt if they were withdrawn, Education would be deprived of one of its main-stays. Political progress would be seriously hindered. Social movements would be far off from the attainment of their purpose. Missionary effort would be sadly hampered. Our Churches have added purity and passion to our national literature. They have stood against all comers for national liberty, and have deepened national goodness. They have helped to make England the refuge of the oppressed and the vindicator of the downtrodden. Their pulpits have never failed to make themselves heard at any important crisis of the nation's life. We are addressing ourselves now late, though not, we trust, too late, by united effort to bring the Gospel and its blessed influence to the homes of our countrymen.

Congregationalism may be said to have left its Sea of Galilee, and is about to venture on its Mediterranean. It is about to concern itself for the ministers of its poorer churches- heroes of many a sore conflict with hardship and with care, conflicts known to God alone. It is beginning to

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ask and to try to answer such questions as these— Why are there not more buildings devoted to the preaching of Christ's holy Gospel? Why are those which exist not better filled? Even when they are filled, where are the multitudes who are absent?

Is the Almighty tired of England?

If our Churches will not ponder these questions, the future of the country is very dark. That was a fearful saying of a French writer,

"The Almighty is tired of Rome"; yet a similar sentence may be spoken of any city and of any nation. Not from Rome and Greece alone, but from the Tigris and the Euphrates and the Nile, there comes a voice to England which says, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die." This warning is enforced again and again in the history of God's own people. It is never out of your ears as you pass through Palestine. I heard it a few months ago, when I stood in the Wailing Place of the Jews at Jerusalem. There, on every Friday, you may see men wearing out their days in the city of their love, soon to be gathered to their fathers in the valley of Jehoshaphat. Women, too, in long white robes kissing the ancient masonry and praying through the crannies. You may hear them chanting the liturgy:—

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"For the palaces that are desolate;
For the walls that are overthrown;
For our majesty that is departed;
For our great men who lie dead;
For the priests who have stumbled;
For the kings who have despised God,—
We sit in solitude and mourn."

I heard that same warning voice again when I stood at Bethel thinking of all its associations. I remembered how, in the words of Amos, it became the "King's Chapel"; how the name "Bethel"—the House of God—was turned into Beth-aven, the House of Folly, until the prophet wrote, "Gilgal shall go into captivity and Bethel shall surely come to nought."

This voice of warning I heard again at Shiloh, once the meeting-place of the tribes of Israel, the home of Samuel and of Eli, for four centuries the abode of the Tabernacle,—and again the

prophet's words seemed to ring in my ears, "Go ye now to My place which was at Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of My people Israel."

I heard the warning again when I stood on the walls of the Synagogue in Capernaum, in which the Saviour taught, and looked round upon the desolation of the Sea of Galilee. The lines of M'Cheyne haunted me for days after that,—

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"Tell me, ye mouldering fragments, tell,
Was the Saviour's city here?
Lifted to heaven, has it sunk to hell,
With none to shed a tear?"

But nowhere did the warning come to me with greater power than it did outside the walls of Samaria. In waking I seemed to see a great king seated on his throne, and by his side another king of Judah, whom he had persuaded to unite with him against Ramoth Gilead. The echo of Ahab's growl of rage seemed to linger amongst the hills, as he said of Micaiah, "*I hate him, for he never prophesies good of me, but always evil.*" I seemed to hear the prophet tell the kings that the loud consenting chant which broke from the false prophets was only a mercenary lie. What reward had they for this faithful servant of the Lord? He was led back, disgraced and dishonoured, to eat the bread and to drink the water of affliction, and Israel went its own way. That was the turning-point in the history of Samaria. From that hour there were occasional regrets, but no permanent, constant repentance. Up to that time Israel had been undecided. Ephraim was "a cake not turned." He had been "too good for banning, and too bad for

blessing." But from this time the prophets had only threatenings to utter, "Woe, woe, to the

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crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim whose glorious beauty is a fading flower." "Ephraim shall be trodden under foot, and the glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley, shall be a fading flower, and as a hasty fruit before the summer, which when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up." "Thy calf, O Samaria, hath kicked thee." "Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, therefore altars shall be unto him to sin."

We hear much from some quarters now-a-days to the effect that England is Ephraim, and that the promises made to Ephraim apply to England. I would I heard more of the dangers and denunciations addressed to Ephraim as being applicable to England,—and that, not on any narrow genealogical ground, but on the broad principle that it is as true for England as for Ephraim, for London as for Jerusalem, for Westminster Abbey, York Minster, and St. Paul's Cathedral, as for the Tabernacle at Shiloh, the Temple at Jerusalem, and the calves at Bethel:—"Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people."

We are living in a fool's paradise, brethren, if we do not lay such warnings to heart. England is worth saving. She holds the dearest interests of the world in her keeping. Never was country

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so favoured; never was nation so dowered by heavenly gifts. The angel of the land stands near the throne of Immanuel.

"Oh, Christians, guard her; guard the eye, the soul
Of Europe. Keep our noble England whole,
For saving her we help to save mankind,

Till public wrong be crumbled into dust,
And drill the raw world for the march of mind,
Till crowds at length be sane and crowns be just,
But wink no more in slothful over-trust."

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THE EVANGELISING POWER OF A SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP.

By R. W. Dale, M.A., LL.D.[1]

WE have inherited from our ecclesiastical ancestors the idea of a Christian Church as a society of saints. It is a noble ideal; it has filled the imagination, and has kindled the passionate enthusiasm of a long succession of devout, heroic, Christian men. But is it worth while to make any serious attempt to realise it? Is it possible even to approach the realisation of it? Is there not a great deal to be gained by relaxing the austerity of our principles and of our traditions? Shall we not act wisely in yielding something to what is called the spirit and temper of the age? Well, what are we to yield? I care very little for the method and forms by which a spiritual ideal is realised. The methods

[1] An Address to the Union in 1886. This address, which has not been previously printed except in a newspaper report, might with profit be printed in letters of gold for public reference, and read at every annual Church meeting in the denomination.

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and forms which are admirable in one generation may cease to be admirable in the next, and ought to be surrendered.

The Church a Spiritual Fellowship.

But the ideal of which we are thinking this morning, the ideal of a society which shall be a society of saints, is not to be surrendered

as though it belonged to the decaying past; it is still above us, it is still beyond us, and it is still worthy of all the devotion with which it has inspired the men in days gone by, to whom its glory was first revealed. To ask for maturity of Christian character and knowledge before a man is admitted into the Church is unreasonable; he comes into Church membership that his knowledge may be enlarged, and his character disciplined to Christian righteousness. We have no right to ask for anything except loyalty to Christ; but as the Church is Christ's, not ours, we are bound to ask for *that*. And by practical maintenance of the Congregational idea of the Church—an idea common to those who have had the presumption to monopolise to themselves the Congregational name, and to our Baptist brethren—by the practical maintenance, I say, of the Congregational idea of the Church, while I mean much else, I mean chiefly a serious and earnest endeavour on the part of ministers and churches

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—by whatever means may seem at once most effective and most in harmony with the free and generous spirit of the Christian Gospel—to make every Christian Church consist of those, and of those only, who have found God in Christ, who have received through Christ the remission of sins and the gift of the Divine life, and to whom the will of Christ is the supreme law of conduct.

I have been requested to illustrate the proposition that the spiritual power of our churches depends on the practical maintenance of the idea of the Church, which has been committed to our trust. But I am prepared to go further, and to say that Congregational churches will soon cease to be Congregational in form as well as in essence, if any considerable number of persons find their way into membership who have

not genuine faith in Christ. The rights of the Christian people are lost, and their responsibilities are suppressed, whenever they cease to be really Christian. Every movement for throwing open the gates of the Church to a mixed multitude is a movement for lessening the Church authority of the Christian commonalty, and increasing the power of the minister.

This was how the churches from the beginning of the second century gradually ceased to be congregational. Large numbers of persons were

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in fellowship who had no personal faith. They were the children or the children's children of the original converts from Judaism or from Paganism; they had inherited Christian customs and the Christian creed; but the vision of God in Christ, which had caused their fathers to break away from their old life, had never come to them. Many of those who were being drawn into the Church from heathenism were drawn by the attractions of the Church itself, by the charm and animation of the new society which was a home for the desolate, a refuge for the miserable, a school of speculation for men who were interested in the mysteries of human life; and large numbers of those that loved the Christian name were at once indifferent to the high and sacred duties which the apostolic polity had entrusted to the Christian commonalty, and were incapable of discharging them.

It was not merely the ambition of the ministers which led them to assume new and larger power, and to withdraw from the Church the control of its own life; the indifference and the religious incapability of the people rendered this assumption of authority inevitable. It was the only way to get the necessary work of the Church done,

and to prevent the Church from breaking to pieces. And whenever the life of the Church

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becomes languid, whenever any considerable number of persons are in membership who have no religious life at all, the same thing happens again. Let a Congregational church be filled with earnest and devout men, and the minister will be their leader, but not their lord. They will do their own work; fulfil their own responsibilities; and they will have their own place in the direction of all church affairs. Throw open the gates of the church to all-comers, and the minister will acquire a kind of supremacy that will be injurious to him and pernicious to the people. The church will become the church of the minister, instead of the minister being the minister of the church. It will be a Congregational church no longer. Or if at times the people actively interfere in the life of the church, there will be the chance, and even the certainty, of trouble.

In a State in which the control of national legislation and policy is ultimately in the hands oi the people, the safety of the State depends upon the virtue of the private citizens. A despotism requires less of integrity and of interest in the public good than a democracy, for with wise and strong rulers the peace may be kept, and the authority of the law maintained though the mass of the people are selfish and vicious. That is

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impossible in a country which has won free institutions. And in Churches which are governed by the clergy, confusion and disorder may be averted, although large numbers of the people are without religious faith. But among us no Church is safe from chaotic disorder, unless, in the great

mass of the people, personal ambition, vanity, and selfishness are subdued by the meekness, the charity, and the humility of Christ. The worst troubles of Congregationalism arise from a careless or wilful disregard of the first great principle of the Congregational polity, that no man should be in the Church who is not in Christ.

Grace the Antidote to Individualism.

The maintenance of the Congregational idea is also necessary if the Church is to fulfil its purpose in securing the development and the blessedness of the personal life of its members. In a sense it is true, no doubt, that Congregational churches assert with great emphasis the principle of Individualism; for we maintain that every man receives absolution of sin not through the ministry of a human priesthood, but direct from the life of God; and that the Divine life is given not through sacraments, but by the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Solitary and alone under the excommunication and the curse of the Churches, the devout soul may

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still be blessed in God. But Churches were founded—"gathered churches," as our fathers called them—because it was felt that the religious life never reaches the perfection of its power and joy, except when the communion of saints is added to communion with God.

A craving for Christian fellowship has revealed itself in every age of the Church. When the Church ceased to satisfy it, because the Church had largely ceased to be Christian, devout men associated themselves together in other ways. They entered into monasteries because they thought it would be easier to live for God if they lived with penitents and saints. The free religious

societies of the Middle Ages, the societies of the Beghards, and the Beguines, and the Brethren of the Common Lord were all created by the same imperious necessity for Christian communion. But according to the purpose of Christ, this fellowship is to be found in the Church itself. Our brothers and sisters in Christ are almost as necessary to us as our Father in heaven. For the development of all the grace of the Christian life we require the warmth of human affection as well as the Divine heat of the love of God. We become more sure that we are the sons of God when we find that Christian men love us as brethren in Christ. The consciousness of restoration to God

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becomes more vivid when we share it with a crowd of devout men who are rejoicing in the Christian Redemption.

And so, to be at a church meeting—apart from any prayer that is offered—any hymn that is sung, any words that are spoken, is for me one of the chief means of grace. To know that I am surrounded by men and women who dwell in God, who have received the Holy Ghost, with whom I am to share the eternal righteousness, and eternal rapture of the great life to come, this is blessedness. I breathe a Divine air. I am in the new Jerusalem which has come down out of Heaven from God, and the nations of the saved are walking its streets of gold. I rejoice in the joy of Christ over those whom He has delivered from eternal death and lifted into the light and glory of God. The Kingdom of God is there.

A Christian Environment needed for the proper Development of Christian Life.

In our modern Churches we see too little of each other, and associations and friendships are as close

and intimate with those who are not in the Church as with our Christian brethren. Our names are on the church books; but our life is not in the life of the Church. Something of the blessedness of being in the household of God we may know; but the power of Christian fellowship—the unmeasured

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benefit that the Christian's life receives from a Christian environment—is inadequately realised. From imperfect contact with the Christian society there results a grave injury to Christian morals, for morality cannot be learned from a book. It is not a system of rules; it cannot be expressed in words. It is a spirit; it is a tradition; it belongs to the atmosphere of the society in which we live.

As long as we live in a world which is largely unchristian, I greatly doubt whether it will be possible for us even to understand, much less to realise, the Church's ideal of righteousness. We did not learn to be trustful, gentle, courageous from books—human or divine—but from living with trustful, gentle, and courageous people. The moral tradition of our homes, of our schools, of the people with whom we have lived, have contributed more to form our moral character than either the lessons of moralists, or the effects of self-discipline. And the Church, the Christian society, is intended to surround us with an ethical atmosphere charged with the Christian spirit; it is intended to be the home of traditions of Christian conduct; it is intended to support, by the public opinion of a community, the ideal of Christian righteousness. But if it is to answer these most practical of all practical purposes, the Church must consist of Christians. Christian morality,

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as well as the blessedness of the Christian life, is promoted by fidelity to the Congregational idea.[1]

The Evangelising Force of a Christian Fellowship.

I suppose that an ideal Church, or a Church that even approached the ideal, would be the most effective of all evangelising forces. We might cease to preach if men were once permitted to see the power, the purity, and the joy of a live fellowship of saints. It is by incarnation that God reveals Himself to our race, touches the hearts of men to penitence, wins their trust, and teaches them His will. This capacious revelation came to us in the life of the Son of God; but the revelation is going on from age to age, and what our fathers called the written Word in Holy Scripture will neither be believed nor understood unless it is illustrated by the living Word, or finds its expression in the spirit and conduct of Christian men. The glory of the Divine grace

[1] There is an obvious application of the principles of this paragraph to the methods and morals of the whole fellowship of churches. It is one of the paralysing things in church life at present, that some of the worst features of a competitive industrial system, and a society saturated with materialistic ideals and mammon worship, are established in the sacred places of the churches' life. The churches are impotent to check these things until they have incorporated in their fellowship more Christian and more spiritual ideals.—ED.

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is most adequately revealed in the actual redemption of men from the power of sin, in their restoration to fellowship with the righteousness and joy of God, in the new and fairer type of morality which is the creation of the supernatural life, not in the vivid and pathetic eloquence of

great preachers, not even in the words—wonderful as they are—of inspired apostles and prophets.

The Church is the present revelation of the power and grace of God in human life and conduct. The Divine Word did not become silent when the latest book of the New Testament was written; the Divine Revelation which had extended over many centuries, and the record of which is perpetuated in our sacred books, still went on; even now the Divine Thought has not been completely manifested. Every man that is in the Church should be an inspired psalm, filled with a diviner joy than that which glows in the range of the ancient Church; and his life should be an illustration of a nobler morality than that of the Ten Commandments. It is for us—this is the special trust of our churches—to keep the canon of the living Scriptures pure, to exclude from it, as far as we can, those apocryphal lives in which the power of the living Spirit cannot be discovered. If the churches were to lose half their members, but if

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the rest were manifestly men and women who had seen the glory of God and were trying to keep the laws of the kingdom of heaven, the power of the Church over the conscience of the nation would be immeasurably increased.

To win the hearts of the English people for Christ, we need, no doubt, the learning and the genius of great apologists and theologians, for, even in the presence of a Divine revelation, the intellect has its rights which can neither be suppressed nor disregarded without peril to faith. But we need, most of all, a universal illustration in the conduct of those who claim to be Christians, of the dignity and purity and grace of Christian ethics. Let every man who enters a Christian Church become more just and considerate in his

relations to the people he employs; more unselfish in his devotion to the interests of his employer; let every rich man become more generous, every poor man more contented; let every man in public office show that he is beginning to acknowledge the great law of Christ, and that he regards his position of exceptional honour and authority as imposing on him exceptional obligations of service; and let him subordinate personal vanity and ambition to the public good. Let every husband, on entering the Church, become more tender to his wife;

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every wife more affectionate and devoted to her husband. Let every child be more loyal and obedient to his parents; let brothers and sisters, as soon as they enter the Church, discover in their mutual relations the divinely appointed sphere for manifesting the gentleness and the self-sacrifice which are more decisive proofs that they have received the Spirit of Christ, than the most energetic activity in what we are accustomed to call Christian work. And these revelations in personal character of the power and glory of the Christian Gospel will do more for the revival of faith than everything besides. Maintain the ideal character of the Church, and you will strike a blow at the very root of religious indifference and unbelief.

Christ waits for the Realisation of Christian Fellowship to reveal Himself more perfectly.

The individual life is an imperfect illustration of the Divine ideal of human perfection. It is only in a society that many of the noblest forces of the moral and spiritual nature of the individual man can be revealed. It is in the family

that the virtues of parent and child are illustrated, and the State is necessary for the illustration of the integrity, the courage, the fuller spirit of citizens. The Church is a Divine Society, and, apart from the Church,

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some of the most beautiful elements of the Divine life which is given us in Christ can never be manifested.

Christ Himself had to gather His elect friends about Him, and to live with those who loved Him, in order that He might be fully revealed. There is a Divine graciousness in His words and spirit when He spoke to the mixed multitude, to publicans and sinners. But if He had not surrounded Himself with a rudimentary church, we should have missed the discourses and the prayers at the end of the Gospel of John, and a great part of the inner life of our Lord would have remained hidden and unknown. Only when He was with those whose hearts were altogether His own, was it possible for Him to manifest that affectionate trustfulness, that infinite tenderness of love, which are disclosed in His words to the twelve.

In an ideal Church—or a Church which even approaches the ideal—there are possible for us forms of social intercourse transcending in grace and beauty and joy all that can exist in any other society. In such a Church there will be a mutual reverence and a divine courtesy, for its members will recognise in each other the august dignity of those who have received the life of God. On the very humblest and obscurest of them there will rest this celestial glory. The consciousness of

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common kinship to God will make the sorrow and the joy of every one of them the common sorrow and the common joy of all. The clear

vision of that perfect righteousness—to which the most imperfect are destined in Christ—will lead to the gentlest forbearance in the treatment of all offences against Christian righteousness and charity; and there will be a generous delight in recognising the manifestation of the power of God in those who have achieved conspicuous saintliness. If one falls into sin the trouble of it will cloud every heart; if one receives from the Divine Spirit great gifts of service, every heart will be filled with thanksgiving. In the unity of such a society in God, men will see that the kingdom of heaven has been established on earth, and that in Christ men have been restored at once to each other and to God.

No actual Church may ever reach this ideal glory; but it was the vision of such a Divine society that came to our ecclesiastical fathers when they broke with the evil traditions of Christendom. It was in the endeavour to realise that vision that they endured imprisonment, exile, and death. They sought the city which hath the eternal foundations "whose builder and maker is God." The vision has not yet passed away; we, their descendants, have seen its Divine splendour; and

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I trust that we too are resolved, with the help of God, to do something in our time to make the Church of Christ an august society of saints.[1]

[1] Readers of this chapter will hardly avoid comparing Dr. Dale's idea of a Christian Church with the rudimentary efforts to realise it made in the establishment of Christian Endeavour Societies within the Churches. It is because our Churches have so largely failed to meet the need for spiritual fellowship that these societies have become to many young people more important than the Church. There is a certain appropriateness in having separate and somewhat different meetings for young people and adults; but there should be more in common in their aim and nature. Dr. Clark's discovery is a popularised and kindergarten version of the old Congregational Church meeting.—ED.

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THE WITNESS OF CONGREGATIONALISM.

By Alexander Mackennal, B.A., D.D.[1]

I.

The Trustworthiness of Piety.

Two characteristic Biblical principles underlie our contention that the regulation of the house of God is the charge of the whole household, that the interpretation of Christ's will is the privilege and responsibility of the company of believers. The first principle is the trustworthiness of piety; the second principle is the social perfection of Christians.[2]

[1] Part of Chairman's address to the Union in 1887.

[2] In the phrase, "Social perfection of Christians," Dr. Mackennal has in view that great principle of which glimpses are caught throughout all these addresses, and which this book is intended to illustrate—that the Christian life is not complete until it has brought the individual into a realised spiritual fellowship, a heavenly citizenship, in which the most potent aims and motives in his own personality are felt to be identical with the aims and motives of others who are in Christ. The growth of that common element is the development of the corporate Christian consciousness —the adolescence of the "full grown man in Christ Jesus." On the complete development of this corporate Christian consciousness the full power and significance of the Gospel waits for its revelation.

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All through the Bible we find honour paid to simplicity of character. Absolute sincerity of purpose is the way of wisdom. In the Old Testament the principle is applied—with the objectivity which marks the earlier Hebrew piety—to the practice of life, to conduct and its issues.

"Let thine eyes look right on,
And let thine eyelids look straight before thee.
Ponder the path of thy feet
And all thy ways shall be established."

In Christ's teaching the same truth is applied to the inner life of impulse and thought and feeling. "The light of the body is the eye. If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." Christ affirms true intention to be the secret of the insight of faith. "If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching whether it be of God, or whether I speak from myself." Truth is not hard to discover; it is only insincerity which blinds men to the signs of the times. The Gospel is like a lighted candle, which is intended to shine on everything which is in the house. "If therefore thy whole body be full of light, having no part dark, it shall be wholly full of light, as when the lamp with its bright shining doth give thee light." There is nothing more distinctive in the attitude of Christ as a

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teacher than His confidence that His teaching could be accepted and His will perceived by all. The things He had come to reveal had been made known unto babes. "If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Two better than One.

The piety of believers is a ground for our confidence in the practical wisdom of Christian assemblies. We have another reason for our confidence in the influence of Christian society on its members. The wisdom of two men in fellowship is more than twice the wisdom of one

man. There is a gain in quality of thought and action when harmoniously minded persons work together.

This is our second characteristic Biblical principle. That perfection—perfection in sympathy, in understanding and in practice—is not individual, but social. Christ's was an individual perfection; but the contemplation of His example seems rather to depress than to elevate us. What hope can there be of wisdom and righteousness and sanctification for us, in presence of the Holy One, whom none could convict of sin: the Unerring One, against whom none could charge mistake; the Righteous One to whom all

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judgment has been committed? We are not freed from this daunting thought even by the faith that saves the soul. How can we undertake to read the mind of Christ, to fill up that which is behind of His purpose, to interpret and accomplish His will? We, with our prejudices, our weaknesses, our narrow round of experience and vision, while He is neither Greek nor Jew, but Son of Man; not for this epoch nor that, but like unto the Ancient of Days; no prophet speaking a portion of God's will, but the very revelation of the Father?

Solidarity in the Christian Life.

The answer to these depressing questions, these διαβολάι, is that redeemed humanity is His interpreter and complement. The Church is "His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." Nothing seems to me clearer —I say this, remembering the exaggerated individualism which into the churches have been betrayed by the necessity of maintaining the demand for personal repentance, personal faith

and personal obedience in order to personal salvation—nothing in the Apostolic writings is clearer than that the "*full grown man,*" of whom St. Paul speaks, is completed humanity. "*The measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,*" to which, in "*the unity of the faith*

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and of the knowledge of the Son of God" we are to attain, is the measure of the body of Christ, not of the individual believer. The crowning blessedness of the Christian life is, that the blessings conferred on every trusting soul are added to and swallowed up in the endless benediction of redeemed humanity. In the general assembly and church of the first-born, we are—

"Rapt from the fickle and the frail."

We are wise with one another's wisdom, and strong with one another's strength. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith"—so ran the daily prayer of the Apostle for the Churches in Asia—"that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God."

Homely Applications.

These two truths—the wisdom of piety and the social perfection of Christians—are transcendent in their scope, but they have very homely applications. The progress of Christendom, the development of doctrine, the wealth of Christian literature, the advance of Christian ethics, are features in their historic realisation; but they may

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be as actually realised, for all particular purposes as fully realised, in the particular congregation, as for the general purposes of God's kingdom they are realised in the history of the universal Church.

A company of persons, instinct with the intelligence of pious purpose, with the clear insight and quick perception that come from singleness of aim, gather together that they may learn from and with each other how to order their own highest lives, and do their own best work. If they be true to one another and themselves, such an assembly must be trustworthy; for the object of their gathering, and within the range of their consultations, they will be wise. They have Christian experience and knowledge of the Bible; their purpose is deepened by prayer; their narrowness is enlarged by fellowship, prejudices disappear at the sight of earnest faces and the sound of pleading voices; a hush of solemn expectancy is upon them all; they take time for conference; they know one constraint, and only one, the constraint of their own strong desire to be right; and their intelligence brightens as they speak.

I have made my description designedly homely, and I ask—are not the conditions of homely wisdom here? And where homely wisdom is, all wisdom may be; "he that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much." The spirit —

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making one or two allowances for difference in subject, even the descriptive language—of Wordsworth's fine sonnet on Napoleon Bonaparte is realised in the story of many a humble Church:—

> "'Tis not in battles that from youth *we* train
> The Governor who must be wise and good,
> And temper with the sternness of the brain
> Thoughts motherly, and meek as womanhood.

Wisdom doth live with children round her knees:
Books, leisure, perfect freedom, and the talk
Man holds with week-day man in the hourly walk
Of the mind's business: these are the degrees
By which true Sway doth mount; this is the stalk
True Power doth grow on; and her rights are these."

The Church the organ of the creative and quickening power of God mediated in Christ to the Soul.

So much for the trustworthiness of social Christian life as it is lived; how much is our confidence enhanced when we view the life of Christians in its source, the living Christ? Christ lives for His people and reigns over them, their King and Lawgiver in heaven; He lives with His people, by spiritual sympathy, their Brother and their Guide; He lives in His people by the medium of the Holy Ghost.

Professor Henry Drummond, in a remarkable passage of his chapter on "Biogenesis," has given us a description of spiritual regeneration. Affirming that—

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"The intervention of life is a scientific necessity if a stone or a plant or an animal or a man is to pass from a lower to a higher sphere,"
he proceeds—

"The plant stretches down to the dead world beneath it, touches its minerals and gases with its mystery of life, and brings them up ennobled and transformed to the living sphere. The breath of God, blowing where it listeth, touches with its mystery of Life the dead souls of men, bears them across the bridgeless gulf between the natural and the spiritual, between the spiritually inorganic and the spiritually organic, endows them with its own

high qualities, and develops within them these new and secret faculties, by which those who are born again are said to *see the Kingdom of God*."

How is it that Professor Drummond has not given us a doctrine of the Church as well as a doctrine of regeneration; that he does not even seem to see that the organ of this spiritual life is the Church? From the hour when Jesus began to build His Church—not upon the truth simply of His Christhood, nor upon the confession of that truth simply, but upon that truth as confessed because experienced, revealed not by

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flesh and blood, but by the Father which is in heaven,—this process of "stretching down," and touching and transforming the natural into the spiritual man has been continuing. The people of "Christ's own possession" are "partakers of the Divine nature"; they have passed out of death into life. And this life is emphatically a social life; it is the fellowship of man with man, it is also the fellowship of man with God.

Such is the import of Christ's petition for His apostles, and for those in the succession of the apostles, even all that believe in Him through their word—"that they all may be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me." It is the implication of the parable of the true vine; the vine lives in all its branches, and every branch lives in the vine. It is the reality in Paul's image of the body and the head.

What the Head is to the Body.

These are among the functions of the head in relation to the members: the head is the sensorium of

the body, receiving all the sensations and turning them into perceptions; it is the organ of self-consciousness by which the members severally know themselves to be but one body; it is the co-ordinating and directing power

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by which the movements of the members unerringly work together for a common end. All that is but a parable of Christ's relation to the spiritual life of His people. He feels the sorrows, the aspirations, the desires which are awakened in us by the world into which He has sent us, and turns them into the perception of things to be avoided, and ends to be secured; He makes our spiritual yearnings a Divine consciousness, and gives us power to become sons of God; He is the living Director of His people's activities, not only their Sovereign, but their Inspirer, the Author and Perfecter of their faith.[1]

Here too, in the living oneness of Christ and His people, we are taught to see the meaning of history, and the consummation of creation. The Church is God's ideal of humanity; all things are to be summed up in Christ, and reconciled to God; the transformation of humanity into a living temple, the ingathering of all the nations into one divine body, was the hidden purpose of God in history which the ages strove, but strove in vain, to read.

And the mode of the Divine indwelling is the secret with which creation is charged. Science

[1] This is what is meant by the New England phrase that Christ is the "political head" of the Churches; He directs and inspires the polity,—ED.

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and philosophy are labouring to tell us that the Creator did not make the world as a workman might accomplish his purpose, according to a plan

in his head, and by the labour of his hands; but that the Creator is the life of creation, its immanent intelligence and force, transcending creation in a might yet unexhausted, and a purpose not yet achieved. That power, inconceivable but not unknown, the "power without us which makes for righteousness," seen in the inorganic world as ordered force, as life in the organic world, as intelligent activity in the animal kingdom, as moral consciousness in man; the life men name as God, not finding Him out by searching, though He be not far from every one of us, is at length revealed in Jesus Christ His Son.

The Saviour of the Community is the Community of the Saved.

Beyond the mystery of the Incarnation of the Eternal Word, there stands another mystery—the incorporation into Christ by the External Spirit, of redeemed humanity. A stupendous truth this, transcending imagination, but not surpassing faith; nay not —if we will but listen to some confessions of the godly, and encourage others to confess—not altogether unapprehended in consciousness. A stupendous truth, but one in proportion with a gospel which, beginning with the Incarnation, and

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centring in the Divine Sacrifice, passes on to the Ascension and the coming of the Holy Ghost. "*The mystery of God,*" says the Apostle to the Gentiles, which hath been hid from the ages, and from the generations, and now hath been manifested to His saints, is "*Christ in you, the hope of glory?* And his unceasing prayer for them is this—"that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know

what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of His might which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and made Him sit at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and He put all things in sub-jection under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which His is body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

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II.

The ideal perfection of the Church of Christ has been recognised by other communions as clearly as by our own; it was the signal merit of the Separatists of the sixteenth century that they affirmed the same law, the same life, the same inspiration for the invisible Church and the visible churches. The venerable and saintly Dr. Pope, speaking at our Jubilee Meeting in Manchester, said—

> "You have been put in trust with one of the noblest Church principles, to which you have been more or less—indeed, more than less—strictly faithful; for you have during many ages, through good report and through evil report, through many jubilee periods without jubilee celebration, with heroic resolution, and with undeviating consistency, maintained the grand idea of the dignity, sanctity, and inviolable rights of the individual Church and congregation. The individual Church, I say, as, so to speak, containing in itself by epitome all the notes and attributes, all the rights and prerogatives and duties of the Church

universal. And this principle we all most profoundly reverence."

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Our Principle is Scriptural Autonomy, not Independency.

May I boldly say that we shall do well to concentrate our testimony upon this fundamental principle of Congregationalism rather than waste our time in defending the methods of independent churches? There are questions, which not very long ago were keenly debated among us, which have no more living importance than the controversy between Drs. King and Wardlaw on "the ruling eldership." Even the old classification of church polities into the Episcopalian, the Presbyterian and the Congregational has ceased to be of practical moment. If it be recognised that the government of each particular church is in its membership, we may adopt diocesan and connexional methods of administration, not only without mischief, but even with the best results. Only it must be borne in mind that the representatives of the churches have administrative functions only; the government of the particular churches is not, even for recurrent or special periods, vested in them; they are constituted simply to fulfil the special charges committed to them.

Church controversy in England to-day is between these three ideas—the Sacerdotal, the National and the Congregational; and in this

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controversy the interests of the kingdom of Christ are intimately concerned.

Sacramentalism.

I shall not add many words to our Past and present testimony against the sacramentalism of the Established Church. Our objection to it is that the system is magical, not spiritual. We repudiate ritualism as Paul repudiated circumcision, because it is a base, mechanical, and fumbling method. We distrust the purpose of the sacerdotal clergy even while we admire their self-devotedness. "*They zealously seek you in no good way; nay, they desire to shut you out that ye may seek them.*" There is, however, a sub-genus of the sacerdotal idea, which I may call officialism; under its influence the most precious things of the Church die out, or put on an odious form. The trustworthiness of piety stiffens into a dogma of infallibility; and the Church asserts authority instead of commending itself to men's judgments and consciences and hearts.

Officialism is no Antidote.

Officialism may exist where there is no sacramentalist leaven; it is a constant peril among ourselves. The churches are ever resigning the functions of the whole membership into the hands of their ordained ministers; and not

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only into their hands, but also into the hands of that changing body known by the modern name of "workers." It cannot be too sedulously affirmed that all Christ's people are Christ's clergy; His kingdom is a kingdom of priests. And when we say that each believer is a priest, we do not make a bald statement that every believer has the privilege of direct access to God for himself, the right to offer up his own prayers, and obtain

for himself the "full assurance of faith"; we mean that every pious soul is an interceding soul, in the lips of each Christian is the law of truth.

There is a beautiful process in the vegetable world, which illustrates the idea of plant life, that every cell is essentially a reproductive cell. Dormant buds will break out from under the bark of a tree which has been cut down by frost; broken leaves will send out roots; where the climate will not allow a plant to form flowers and ripen seeds, bulbules may appear at the nodes and produce new plants. There are species which, in the struggle for existence, owe their continuance to the fact that this capacity has not been lost in an excessive differentiation.

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Is Union with an Established Church possible?

Some of our objections to the National Church idea have been already touched on in this address; I will now only reply to a question which is sometimes put to us in all charity and good faith, "Why do you not bring your special sentiments about the spiritual life as your contribution to the Established Church? there is need of conceptions like yours of religious possibilities to counteract the tendency to worldliness inevitable in a National Church; join us and leaven us with your leaven. Help us to repeal the Act of Uniformity, and secure parochial government of the Churches; they will then be as free to you as to us, and you will have such a platform for the propagation of your doctrines as you cannot have in your separation." We recognise the force of this appeal; we feel the

allurement; we are touched by the generosity of the invitation; and yet we answer, "We cannot."

If the Church were only, as Matthew Arnold represents it, an organisation for doing good, we might listen. But even then, we should wonder where was the necessity of an institution, with a spiritual name and spiritual sanctions, to bind us together for the accomplishment of work in

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which we can already unite as fellow-citizens. "For most of the purposes which are contemplated —local and national philanthropy, education, gatherings of all classes in recreation, for moral instruction, for the sweetening of customs and the purifying of laws—we are ready to unite with you. We do so as fully as we are able; we are conscious as well as you that the chief hindrance to our perfect co-operation is the existence of an exclusive church. Disestablish that, and our union for practical national goodness would be secure."

The platform, too, which is offered us for the propagation of our distinctive Church doctrines, we have already, in a free press and our free Churches. There are some conceptions which require to be embodied in order to be understood; the exemplification of them is as necessary to their acceptance as the discussion of them. And let us not be suspected of irritation if we avow our belief, that the doctrines of the free Churches have leavened English religious thought because they have been exemplified by religious communities in separation. The very invitation which is extended to us is the sign of an influence on the Established Church which would never have been ours had we yielded to the seductive dream of comprehension.

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A Church established by Parliament a Frankenstein Monster.

But our final answer is this—The Church of Christ is an organisation with a law, a life, an inspiration, of its own; the magic has never yet been discovered which can transmute a nation into a church. *Ecclesia nascitur non fit.* Like all living things, the Church must obey its own formative idea; its growth, the mode of its development is determined by the indwelling spirit. Chas. Kingsley had a striking thought—as true, I believe, as it was striking—that from the moment of conception, the soul built up the body, and not the body acquired a soul. Frankenstein sought to make a man; he gathered together simples of nature, chemical compounds, portions of living beings, scraps from the charnel-house; and into the body he so constructed he somehow infused life. But it was an incomplete life, a treacherous gift; he had made a monster and not a man. The inevitable limitations of a manufactured life were here; possibilities dimly conceived which could not be realised; passions imitative rather than impulsive; there were no wise natural inspirations to quicken and control the miserable being; his very aspirations were criminal, his sorrows were vehement as his desires.

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Congregationalists are Catholic and Churchmen, not Undenominationalists.

Another form of doctrine about the Church against which Congregationalism is a protest, is what

may be called the anti-church doctrine. There are many reasons why undenominational Christian efforts should be so prevalent among us as to be actually hostile to all the Churches; I will not specify them lest I should wound some towards whom our only remonstrance is "*Talis qui sis, utinam noster esses*"; but, as many undenominationalists are devout, tender-conscienced, Christ-loving persons, I should like to ask them one or two questions. Are you content to leave the Apostolic practice unimitated, and the large promises of the Master unfulfilled? Surely He meant something when He said, "*Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven*"? If your brother offend against you, to what committee can you tell it? The dainty eclecticism which, "exempt from public haunt," looks out only for "the good in everything," has in it more of cynicism than of faith. Christians were not called that they might choose their own company; we are to "*bear one another's burdens,*" and so "*fulfil the law of Christ*"; they "*which*

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are spirittial" are to restore him who is detected in fault.

Undenominational societies have "*a show of wisdom in will worship,*" but they leave a large portion of Christian social service unattempted; they evade, instead of solving, the chief problems of the Christian life. The testimony of Congregationalists that a church of Christ is a permanent local assembly of the faithful, is an integral part of our witness. Here comes in our recognition of the sanctity of the nation, of neighbourhood, and of the family, to which churchmen, both Episcopal and Presbyterian,

suppose us indifferent; these are not in themselves Churches, but they are the natural basis of Church association. The fathers of Independency never contemplated sectarian Churches with an exclusive creed and a distinctive ritual. They taught and we affirm that a true Church is an abiding fellowship of all believing persons who can conveniently gather into one assembly, bringing their various conceptions of doctrine and modes of action to enrich the common thought and practice. Few things have done more than the so-called undenominational sentiment to exaggerate and prolong denominationalism.

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III.

Free Church Union: Baptists.

Happily the witness of Congregationalism is not exhausted in protest; we stretch out hands of cordial fellowship to some whole communities and to many in all the Reformed fellowships. Several years ago I was asked by a lady minister of the Friends, "Why are not you and the Baptists one?" I was obliged to answer that I did not know. I am in as complete ignorance of the point to-day as I was then. With so near an approach to identity in Christian sentiment, and so complete a confidence and affection, is it not time for our co-operation if not our union? Let us respect each other's traditions—family and local, as well as denominational,—and not overdrive the feeble of the flocks; but let us show as manly an indifference to prejudice and vested interests as we are continually demanding from our political leaders.

Presbyterians.

With the Presbyterians, too, we have much in common; our family likeness is only illustrated by our characteristic differences. What a history is that of the Presbyterian and the Congregational—or as it used to be, the Presbyterian and

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Congregational—churches! Twin children of the Reformation, with the same type of doctrine and idea of social worship; aiming at the same end yet contesting each point which it was possible to contest; with quarrels ever ending in attempts at reconciliation, and reconciliation always thwarted when it seemed assured; developing variations in expression and habit, and learning more from our differences than we could have learned from identity,—we seem equally unable to forget our ancient alliance and to renew it.

> "Alas! they had been friends in youth;
> But whispering tongues can poison truth;
> And constancy lives in realms above;
> And life is thorny; and youth is vain;
> And to be wroth with one we love
> Doth work like madness in the brain.
>
> . . .
>
> Each spoke words of high disdain
> And insult to his heart's best brother:
> They parted—ne'er to meet again!
>
> . . .
>
> They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
> Like cliffs which had been rent asunder;
> A dreary sea now flows between;—
> But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder,
> Shall wholly do away, I ween,
> The marks of that which once hath been."

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Methodists.

The cessation of the Calvinist and Arminian controversy in the larger thought of our time, and the general acceptance of the fact that special seasons of spiritual quickening may be expected and should be specially employed for spiritual culture, has revealed to us how much there is in common between us and the Methodist connexions. Their churches and ours have been complementary, rather than antagonistic, to each other. The questions which we have wrought out doctrinally they have solved in practice and experience. We have preached "justification by faith," they have found assurance. We have proclaimed the equal privilege and responsibility of all believers; they discover something for everyone to do, and send out an army of local preachers; we teach that churches should be assemblies of the saints, they have witnessed to the possibility and experience of present saintliness. We accept their declaration that they are "the friends of all, the enemies of none"; and rejoice in their endeavour to spread "scriptural holiness throughout the land."

The Established Church.

In the most heated times of the separatist controversy, our fathers made no attempt to unchurch all the adherents of the National Epis-

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copal establishment. They had an eye for the faithful, even if these were a faithful few, who "feared the Lord," and "spake often one to another," and rejoiced at the latent church

within the parish. We also do this, not despite, but because of, our Congregationalism. We rejoice in the piety, the self-devotedness, the sacrificial labours, and saintly temper of many, laity as well as clergy, women as well as men, in the Established Church; and say, without attempting to number them, "The Lord make His people an hundred times so many more as they be."

We Congregationalists are said to be "excellent members of the church militant," and we do not repel the commendation. But we are not indifferent to the blessing of the peacemakers. Quite as significant as our contests for truth and righteousness is our desire to come to an understanding with our brethren; we should "hail with profound satisfaction any movement which would lead to conference of all the Evangelical bodies on the momentous question—how they can best contend together to bring the masses of the English people into the obedience of the faith of Christ."

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IV.

If I have carried you along with me in this delineation of the witness of Congregationalism, I have no doubt what answer you will return to the question, Is Congregationalism worth preserving? I should like to raise this question in our assemblies with somewhat of the clamorousness of an awakening conscience; for to do an effective work requires a very different measure of obligation from that which prevails among the majority of our members, who seem to think they fulfil their trust when they maintain their own religious ordinances, and give an occasional contribution to the few societies which the

public opinion of the churches compels them to recognise.

The larger Congregationalism.

We can only preserve Congregationalism by enlarging its influence; and for this we need a generosity in the giving of our members generally, such as has been hitherto only practised by a few rich men, and by some poor persons who, in their contributions to the Lord's treasury, are continually approaching the limit of "all their living." We may need also to sacrifice

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many of our traditional sentiments; we shall need great ingenuity in devising plans of action, boldness in applying them, and all the steadfastness of faith.

In our manufacturing counties their prevails a notion that English history began with the application of steam to machinery; there is here an inability to estimate the significance of the continued existence of Churches, which for more than two hundred years have maintained purity of fellowship and struggle for religious freedom. To churches in these districts, let Moses speak—"If thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen into decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him. … Thou shalt not rule over him with rigour, but shalt fear thy God."

There are those, moreover, who seem to think that English history is limited by this island; oblivious of the greater England across the western and the southern oceans, indifferent to the stirrings of free evangelical sentiment in both Protestant and Catholic Europe. Let such contemplate the example of Paul—"So have I striven to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's founda-

tion ... having hope that, as your faith groweth, we shall be magnified in you according to our province unto further abundance, so as to preach

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the Gospel even unto the parts beyond you, and not to glory in another's province in regard of things made ready to our hand."

The Colleges Home Missionary Institutions.

We call upon the churches for generosity; the churches call on us for prudence in method and a wise economy; each must hear the other's call. It is quite a modern notion that every Congregational church must have its own ordained minister, whose time is wholly devoted to that church; and the notion is as futile as it is new.

By grouping congregations, by a large extension of lay preaching and visitation, by a return where practicable to lay pastorates, and by increasing the labours and extending the influence of those ordained to be both pastor and teacher, we could give new vigour to many a dying cause, and contribute our fair proportion to the evangelistic agencies of our times. It is to the revival of the evangelistic fervour that I look for the enlargement of Congregationalism; and I pray that our colleges may be the first of our societies to experience such a revival. Every one of them was founded as a Home Missionary institution; and great as may be the claims of the churches on the colleges, the claims of heathen England are greater far.

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Suburbanism and Town Life.

There is the most urgent necessity that we consider the obligations of the churches to the large towns, with a view to their immediate fulfilment. A long experience of suburban life convinces me that its influence has been almost uniformly and wholly adverse, alike to the religious condition of the congregations and the moral well-being of the nation. The *Congregational Review* for April contains a faithful description of its influence on the towns, from the pen of Dr. Edward Judson, of New York, who sacrificed a position of ease and honour, which he was well fitted to adorn, that he might personally engage in town mission work.

> "An untutored working woman or man who toils hard and long for what will buy but little of life's needs, who has seen congregation after congregation leave the town districts of our city, because fashion is retreating northward before the advance of business, and it is not considered pleasant or in the best form to maintain a church in a region whose private houses are being gradually transformed into tenements,—any hard-pressed wage-worker not blessed with strong faith in God, who has seen Christianity moving out of his neighbourhood to the precincts of wealth, and the churches

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> dying, as it were, before his eyes, is apt to feel somehow as if Christianity were deserting him, as if, because there is a deep snowdrift in front of my door, I should infer that there is deep snow all over the plain. His belief in a good God, in a providing Father seems to weaken, and we must not be surprised that doubt, at last, supplants faith, and atheism grows. So come despair and hopelessness, carelessness and improvidence. So, too,

follow ignorance and intemperance, brutality, pauperism, and crime."

It is as hard for the wealthy to maintain a living interest in the poor, and a wise sympathy with them, when separated from them by miles of country and every social condition, as it is for the poor, in these circumstances, to maintain a strong trust in God. There are many families in the suburbs of our large towns who feel the same sort of concern for the spiritual and temporal welfare of those on whose labour their prosperity is built, as they feel for the poor of Nice or of Florence when they spend a winter there. In neither case is there a want of kindly feeling or of earnest religious anxiety; in both cases the possibility of effectual help is limited by the habit of absenteeism. It is an infinitely distressing thought that, in an age abounding

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with true consecration and affectionate impulse, so little of this should find its outcome in really efficient service. The reason is because of the different spheres in which the different classes live. It was not by compassionate visitations "few and far between," that our Lord redeemed men, but by sharing their lot. If the privileged among us were angels, they would know themselves to be "ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation." They are more than angels, with more pressing obligations, a power of more intimate sympathy and of true help. They are disciples, called to be as their Master; servants who can and must be as their Lord.

Settlements and Institutional Churches.

This subject is not one for an *ex cathedra* deliverance, but for the closest and frankest conference;

there is, however, a practical suggestion I would make. Napoleon's tactics were said to have had always one leading idea,—that, viz., of *concentration;* he brought his main forces to bear on one point, success here gave him a centre from which victory might radiate over all the field. In our religious tactics we have followed the reverse method, and with very sad results. We ought never to have allowed a

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town church, in the midst of a large population, to be depleted; each prosperous suburban church should make itself responsible for maintaining one town church in efficiency; it would be a centre for the most effective missionary work. Where mission halls are established, they should be generously sustained. Clubs and banks and reading-rooms, temperance and provident societies, recreation rooms, dispensaries—all these should cluster round the hall; and a church house might be a most valuable agency—if once established, the church house would probably be soon recognised as the most essential part of the mission scheme,—in which there should always be at least two suburban church members in residence, to their own great profit, and for the benefit of the mission district. Should any one demur to the inclusion of all these secular agencies among the operations of a church, I would reply that it is forced upon us. If the exigencies of our worldly life have led to the withdrawal from large districts of all the benign social influences which are felt when rich and poor meet together, the churches have no more urgent obligation than to restore them.

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THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

By Charles Albert Berry, D.D.

(1897.)

I.

It is scarcely necessary to remark that the ecclesiastical problem will not yield its solution to any one set of considerations and appeals. It will require to be approached by differently equipped men, moving towards the centre along numerous lines of effort, and bringing to bear upon it all kinds of resource. Scholars will be needed who can present the results of their investigations into patristic literature and primitive custom. Historians, who with keen eye and patient step have tracked the origin and accretions of error through the Christian centuries, must use their weapons in this fight for peace. Constructive thinkers, able to detect original lines of architecture beneath the

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unsightly and inharmonious additions of later builders, will render splendid service when they present their sketch of the Apostolic Church. Modest and obscure Christian disciples will speed the gracious work as, coming from north, south, east, and west, they bear a common witness to their new life in Christ while showing many differences in style and type of discipline. Existing Churches must join this Christian endeavour by striving to realise, each in its own way, the best fruits of gracious fellowship, and by exhibiting, alongside their varieties of method, a striking resemblance in their possession of love. And not

least among the forces which will inaugurate the new and better epoch of ecclesiastical fraternity is the Christian preacher. By the tender and gracious presentment of the living Lord, by the subtle suffusion of His people with desire after spiritual excellences, by the unconscious yet contagious charm of exalted sentiment and purified vision, by the spiritual power of His own kindled and prophetic soul, He must lead and lift men into those higher levels of life where the atmosphere of love solves many things insoluble at lower levels and in a coarser air. These, and such as these, must all contribute their part to the solution of the ecclesiastical problem.

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Restatement of the Problem.

But it is not with them, nor from their point of vantage, I wish to deal now. For there is still another way of contributing to the settlement of this question, and it is to be found in the restatement of the problem to be solved—a restatement in which the respective factors shall be arranged in such natural order as to indicate their own solution. Is it not true that our ecclesiastical difficulties have arisen and been intensified through the common blunder of making primary and determinative what is really secondary and instrumental? And is it not more than likely that whether we reach it soon or late the way out will be found to lie in putting first things into the first place, and in the regulation of the secondary by the demands of the primary?

An illustration from the sphere of manufacturing industry will assist me in clearing the point on which I wish to lay stress. Which is the determining factor, the machine which produces or the

product for the sake of which the machine was devised and erected? In other words, does cloth exist for the sake of the loom, or does the loom exist for the sake of the cloth? Is it not evident that what is wanted is *cloth,* that we only want *machinery* for the sake of the cloth it helps us to

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produce, and that the character of the cloth to be made determines the nature of the machine which is to make it? I recall a circumstance from the sphere of my first pastorate which strikingly confirms and strengthens the point under discussion. I was passing one of those huge hives of industry which, despite the griminess of their ample brick walls, and the multitude of their flat and dusty windows, have an interest and a beauty of their own for men who know something and care much for the people who toil within them. Looking up I was startled to see a piece of machinery swung from one of the topmost windows and hurled on to the stones of the mill-yard beneath. Another and another followed in rapid succession. Crash after crash resounded through the air, as cranks and pulleys and cylinders and frames splintered themselves into fragments on the ground. I was perplexed. Had a fire broken out? Were madmen in charge of that top storey of the mill? Were wreckers at work in wild passion at some industrial wrong and taking vengeance on their master's goods?

The explanation was instructive and suggestive when I could find the right man to give it me. A better type of product had come into the market. These machines, though in good order and nearly new, could not make it. "And you

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see, sir," said my informant, "this mill doesn't run for the sake of its machinery, it runs to make the

best cotton on the market; it's the best cotton we want and must have, so we are clearing the mill for machinery that can make it." I do not believe a complete college faculty could have taught me half as much in twice the time I spent at that mill.

The Product of Religious Work and Life.

The thing to be produced, *that* is the determining factor! Shall we not find in that reminder some guidance towards the solution of our problem? For what is it, in the higher and permanent interests of life, which religion is meant to produce? What was the declared ultimate purpose of our Lord in bringing to earth His evangel of glad tidings, and in living and dying for men? Was it to rescue wretched souls from the threatening perils of hell beyond the grave? Was it to win an open way to a heaven above the sky for such as wished to walk in it? Was it to discover for man, and to impart to him, new meanings and possibilities in life, new joys, new loves, new hopes, new glories? Was it to create a society in which new-born and kindred souls might minister to each other's culture and comfort? That these, and objects more than these, entered into the purpose and word of the Master, we all gladly and gratefully recognise.

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But they entered only as details and stages in the outworking of a purpose which lay beyond them all, and which was to be at once their issue and their crown.

The Kingdom of God.

He came to found the Kingdom of God on the earth. That was the supreme and ultimate purpose of His Messiahship. The thing to be

produced, if I may reverently speak of it so, was a new earth, peopled with a new humanity, grounded upon foundations of Divine truth and love, basking in the light of peace and exhibiting the life of heaven; a new earth, type and foretaste of a new heaven, in which all the activities and relations of life, moving round the centre of Divine love, shall issue in the social redemption and the spiritual health of humanity. This, then, the entrancing and attractive revelation of Christ, is what religion exists to evolve and establish.

The Final Cause of the Gospel.

The Kingdom of God on earth is the primary idea and purpose of the Christian Gospel. All else is secondary and instrumental, whether it be the redemptive work of the Christ of history, or the spiritual toil of the Christ of eternity, whether it be the inspiration of the Bible, or the creation and endowment of the Christian Church, whether it be the ministry of reconciliation which strives after

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the conversion of individual souls, or the Divine philanthropies which are inspired for the healing and help of humanity. These are but steps up to the supreme purpose. They are but its servants, its agencies, its instruments of expression, its channels of energy. Not in themselves, but from it, do they discover their significance. And from its high vantage must they be studied, appraised, and understood.

The Kingdom of God is the determining factor in the Gospel of Christ. And when we have succeeded, as succeed we must in spite of all contradiction and learned protest, in centring the thought of Christendom upon this primary point, and in lifting the problem away from the meshes of secondary agencies into the revealing light of

the final purpose, we shall have gone far towards ending the present ecclesiastical deadlock. Yea, we shall have accomplished more. We shall have saved the Churches of Christ from the peril of self-destroying discussion about themselves, and restored to them the vision, and done something to reawaken the enthusiasm of their Divine mission in the world.

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II.

The Churches and the Kingdom.

Our first duty, then, is to clarify and to impress upon Christendom the vital distinction between the Churches of Christ and the Kingdom of God. Of this double duty it is probably easier to effect the clarification than to distribute and establish the impression. That distinction, however, is strongly marked and clearly sustained throughout the New Testament. The Gospels, more especially the three synoptic gospels, are almost wholly occupied with the announcement of the Kingdom, and but seldom and briefly touch upon the Church. The Epistles, on the other hand, are largely devoted to Church doctrine, Church discipline, Church ministries, and have not much to say upon the Kingdom. Our Lord Himself, in His sermons, His parables, His conversations, says little, and that little prophetically, about His Church. He devoted Himself almost entirely to the declaration and definition of the Kingdom of God. He spoke of it as having already come, although the Church was not yet founded. He revealed its laws and conditions in the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount. He indicated, especially in the seven

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parables of the Kingdom recorded in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, the manner and direction of its growth, the reception it would be accorded by different classes of people, the obstacles it would require to surmount, the hindrances it would be called to suffer, and the final triumph it would assuredly win. The Kingdom, *the Kingdom,* THE KINGDOM, was a sustained and swelling note through all the varieties of His matchless discourse.

Our Lord's Death.

This fact, especially when brought alongside another fact which helps to explain it, is not to be lightly considered. Why did our Lord, while often forecasting the fact of His death, say so little as to its redemptive significance, and leave to His Apostles the task of revealing its wondrous depths of truth and grace? Are we to conclude, as so many have done to their own and others' impoverishment, that Christ did not attach the solemn value to His death which His Apostles did; and did not, as did they, see in it the mystery and the power of sacrificial redemption? Do not they rather command the assent of the human conscience and the glad confirmation of Christian experience, who say it was because His realised and sufficient work was to *make* atonement, because until accomplished it could neither be

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published nor explained, and because, when once fulfilled, others could be qualified to expound what only He was able to effect. So in the Gospels the great fact is recorded, whose glowing interpretation will be found in the Epistles.

Redemption out or Sin into the Kingdom.

This reference throws light upon our present path. For when I find Messiah saying much of God's Kingdom, little about His own Church, leaving till alter the Kingdom had been inaugurated the founding of the Church which was to be its messenger and minister, I cannot hesitate either as to the distinction between them, or as to the order of their significance in the Master's thought. As His death was the supreme factor in redemption, so the new Kingdom was redemption's final aim and crown. Explanations of His death must follow its achievement. So must the instruments of the Kingdom await the inauguration of the Kingdom whose instruments they were destined to be. The one fact throws light upon the other. And the order in which they stand makes it indisputable that as the preacher is servant of the Cross he proclaims, so is the Church servant of the Kingdom it exists to promote; and neither preacher nor Church of much account in themselves,—only of any worth when they do their task well, and hide

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their own importance behind the splendour of the cause they serve.

Means and Ends to be Distinguished.

Travelling along other lines of scriptural investigation one is brought to this same distinction between Church and Kingdom. Our Lord sent out preachers before He created Churches to give them calls, and the message they were to deliver was the Gospel of the Kingdom. He also taught His disciples, who subsequently were to be leaders in His Church, to pray that God's Kingdom might come,

and His will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. And so inwardly convinced has the Church been in every age that she is *not* the Kingdom, notwithstanding the claim of some of her teachers that she *is,* that she has never ceased to repeat the prayer of her Lord. But when we turn to the Apocalypse, and gaze in adoring gratitude upon the beauty and peace of the City or Kingdom of God, we are amazed, when our first impressions of the scene give place to quieter and closer observation, as much by the omissions as by the glories. *There is no Temple in it.* The City Temple has a large place to fill and a brave task to perform down here. But it will achieve its highest glory when, having accomplished its mission of making all men Templars or Church-

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men, it becomes indistinguishable amid the spiritualised beauty which everywhere surrounds it, and fades into the gracious oblivion of that Light which has banished Death and Night from the City.

A Divine Glow in the Life of the Churches comes when the Divine Purpose is realised.

The Kingdom of God is God's new earth, waiting to be realised down here. It is God's new heaven, soon to complete itself around the throne. And what is the Church of Christ? It is the whole company of the faithful whether in heaven or on earth, a company linked into spiritual unity by a common life, which is shared by them all in Christ. And what are *Churches* of Christ? They are outward and visible communities of Christ's people, who, conscious of their part and place in the Church Universal, and having desired to confess their Lord before

men and to work for His Kingdom on earth, join themselves together for worship, edification, work; and, believing His promise to be with them and in them, commune with Him and with each other in Him, for the sustenance of spiritual life, and that they may become voice and hand for Christ in the redemption of the world and man.

They are His body, doing the work which He did when bodily present with men; His temple,

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shedding light from every window, and dispensing the gifts of love to the poor and needy; His army, marching against the enemies of God and man, attacking and destroying strongholds of wickedness, releasing the oppressed, and letting the prisoners go free; His builders, with trowel as well as sword, busily repairing the walls and laying the streets of His city, restoring again the glories of the reign of God, building the banqueting hall in which—when all things are ready—the marriage will be celebrated of the Lamb and His Bride, the City of God.

That is the Church in its ideal relations to Christ and His Kingdom; not yet risen either to ideal vision or ideal consecration; one day assuredly to realise itself in Him, and to give itself to His work with all-conquering enthusiasm. And the dawn of that day will be accelerated when we have cleared our own perception of the Church's real place and function in the Kingdom of God, when we have taught men to reverence her only for the sake of the work she does, and not for the claims she makes, and when, having exalted the Kingdom into its proper primacy in the thought of man, as it has always held primacy in the purpose of God, the Church will be moved to tear and burn the garments of her false pride, to dress herself in the becoming apparel of one of the King's

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servants, and to spend upon her mission of redemption what she now squanders in the prosecution of impossible pretensions and claims.

III.

This recognition of the Church's true place and mission in the Kingdom of God will, as I said, carry with it the correction of many errors which at present afflict both the thought and the life of Christendom.

(1) It will exalt and spiritualise the Church as Christ's chosen instrument for the redemption and peace of the world. At the present moment, as for centuries past, the honour and efficiency of the Church are imperilled, if not seriously affected, by mistaken ideas of her status and duty. Three of these perils are distinctly traceable either to the ignoring or to the confusing of the distinction which underlies the present argument. They are Erastianism, Multitudinism, Institutionalism.

Erastianism.

The first of these grows out of the radical misconception of the Church as the mere embodiment and expression of the best fruits of civilisation. This is what may be called Low Churchism at its

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lowest point. Anything like distinct and direct Divine endowment of the Church for purposes of leadership is here implicitly denied. The Church is simply the measure and the voice of the highest current thought; and it follows naturally from this that the Church ought to be governed by the best men of the world in the interests of the nation and the age in which it exists. Erastianism is much

more serious a heresy than is involved in mere State—connection and State—endowment of the Church. It is the frank affirmation of the State *as* Church, and the equally frank acceptance of the logical conclusion that the State must be as distinctly master of its religious as of its civil or military departments. It must in justice be said that this doctrine of the Church is as loudly repudiated by men within the Church of England, and by men in other Continental Established Churches, as by ourselves; though, in truth, it must also be added that the repudiation of these Established and Endowed people says more for their churchmanship than for their logic or their sense of political fairness. But we will let that pass.

For the moment, and as far as the point now under discussion is concerned, I will express my thankfulness that many supporters of the vicious principles of State-Churchism have escaped the

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poisonous influences of Erastianism, and retained zeal for the Church in spite of their connection with the State. For Erastianism, in its zeal for national religion so called, destroys both the Church of Christ and the Kingdom of God. Its fetish is the existing State, qualified by culture and suffused with pious sentiment; and in its perverse identification of State and Church it degrades the latter and robs the former of its best instrument of progress. Its Church is not creator but creature; not any longer pioneer of advancement, but simply register of current ideas; in no sense a teacher sent from God, but mere monitor obeying behests of a master in meanest school of modernism. This school of thought, although much poorer to-day than it was a decade ago in influential leaders, is still, as regards its essential idea, a potent mischief, not only in

Established but in some Free Churches. And the only way to overcome it, and to rid the Church of the peril of paralysis, is to impress upon Christendom such a glowing picture of the Kingdom of God, and such a sense of assurance that God means His Kingdom to be realised on earth, that the necessity will be felt for a Church, divinely inspired and equipped, which will not only transcend modern culture in the splendour of its ideas, but which can command energies and

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inspirations beyond the reach of strongest State or highest civilisation.

Multitudinism.

The error of Multitudinism, equally disastrous to both Church of Christ and Kingdom of God, operates at precisely the opposite point from Erastianism. It, too, proceeds upon the confused notion that Kingdom and Church are identical; but whereas the Erastian absorbs the Church in the State, this doctrine absorbs the Kingdom in the Church. Mistaking the one for the other, it naturally reads the parables of the Kingdom as descriptions of the proper attitude and activity of the Church. And as, in those parables, the wheat and the tares grow together, so this theory lays it down that all baptised persons in the community are members of the Church.

Thus, instead of the Church existing within and working for the redemption of society, society sweeps into, and by very bulk overshadows and out-influences the Church. Indeed, the identity of the Church would be as completely lost in this case as in the other were it not that the clergy claiming to be the embodiment of spiritual authority, and never allowing themselves to be forgotten by the world around them, do so far

preserve some sort of separate entity for the Church, But it is surely apparent that a Church

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so interlaced with and hampered by the world it is meant to redeem, is seriously handicapped in its work, however gracious may be its intention. It is true the leaven must be mixed closely with the meal in order to its efficiency. But it is because the leaven is distinct from the meal in nature and function that it does its work. And when that distinction is fully understood and observed in the sphere of religious service, the brighter will be the hope and prospect of the millennium. The Church that would save the world must be separate from, while mingling with, the world it seeks to save. Yea, the Church that would hasten the Kingdom of God must keep itself distinct from the nations and social orders out of which and through which it is commissioned to win that glorious consummation.

Institutionalism.

Of Institutionalism I need only say that it is an attempt, growing out of the misconception just criticised, to centre men's thoughts upon, and to claim their reverence for, the Church, as if it were itself the Kingdom, possessing already the regal splendours of dominion. But, before I leave this brief analysis of the mischiefs which spring from the confusion of Kingdom and Church, and which can only be overcome by the restoration of each

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to its proper place, I cannot allow myself to lose the opportunity which the subject naturally affords me of making somewhat clearer a movement in which some of us are deeply engaged.

High-Church Congregationalism.

There has been much talk of late concerning High-Church Congregationalism. It is not unknown to you that the present speaker has claimed the title of High Churchman. I am so far an enthusiast in this matter that I sincerely rejoice in abundant evidences of the fact that this claim, so far from being a singular and perhaps pardonable eccentricity, is now largely affirmed and defended by our people. But what does it mean? I think I may venture to believe, after the argument to which I have invited your attention, that no one will suspect it of the least taint of sacerdotalism. It is the affirmation of the Church, of the Church's privileges, powers, and duties, as against the individualist on one hand, who thinks he can complete his spiritual culture and fulfil his duty to Christ and humanity without coming into associated fellowship; and on the other hand as against the priests, who have arrogated to themselves the functions and even the very name of the Church, and have insinuated themselves into dominion where they were under debt of service. But this affirmation of the Church as a Christ-ordained

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and Christ-equipped society, while it operates for the correction of these two dangerous errors, is inspired by considerations and emphasised for reasons much deeper than these.

At the heart of it this revived enthusiasm for the Church is an attempt to recover the Church's spirituality, to save it from the blight of Erastianism, whether explicit or implied, to differentiate it from the world in which and for which it is called to labour, and to cleanse and clothe it with fresh fitness for its Divine enterprise. Such a movement, so far from repeating the old blunder of. making the Church a fetish, to be reverenced for

its own sake and in a spirit approaching to idolatry, is an effort to restore to the Church its instrumental efficiency as an agent of the world's redemption. It takes its rise in the distinction between Kingdom and Church; it discovers its motive in the desire to make the Church fit for the work of the Kingdom. Not sufficiency of institutionalism, but efficiency for service, is the note of this movement. It is zeal for the Kingdom of God which inspires this new devotion to the Church of Christ.

(2) While this setting of Church and Kingdom into orderly and Scriptural relation indicates the way out of our ecclesiastical deadlock, and

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corrects many inadequate and inaccurate theories and methods, it does something of even greater importance. It sets before the Churches the ideal they exist to serve. It renews, enlarges, urges Christ's commission to His people to go forth and conquer the world. The Kingdom of God is to be erected fair, beautiful, strong, where now the world-kingdoms of greed and lust and hate cover and stain the earth. This City of God, this new and blessed order of life for man, is to be built out of the materials now lying in confused and chaotic mass around our feet. And the Churches of Christ are to be the builders. They are to pull down the old walls and habitations of wickedness. They are to gather out the stones, to cleanse and polish them for use in the new structure, to arrange them into their orders of meetness for the Master's use. They are to dig out new foundations, deep and strong, on whose truth and trust the coming city shall rest secure

for ever. They are, in a word, with sword and trowel to fight and build, to build and fight, until the New Jerusalem, which descended once out of heaven as an architectural ideal, shall shine resplendent in beauteous actuality on the earth's expanse.

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Divine Discontent with Independency.

Do you think, my brethren, that we have caught the real significance of these figurative presentments? Are our Churches—so learned and sound in matters of doctrine and polity—equally praiseworthy in their perception and fulfilment of Christ's world-wide commission? It cannot honestly be so affirmed. And yet it cannot be truthfully said that no signs of such an awakenment are to be discerned. There is, I think, a divine dissatisfaction at work among many of our people. The vision of the New Kingdom has stirred them to self-examination and earnest discussion. The feeling that if Christ were bodily present He would busy Himself with the wrongs and sorrows of men, is beginning to rouse the conviction that His Churches, the depositaries of His life, should spend themselves in the same service. Perhaps, as yet, our efforts in this direction have been crude and ill-judged. But much is done when the conviction is awakened that much waits to be done. Some things, meanwhile, are being recognised and admitted with frank sincerity. If the Church exists for the Kingdom, then the Church which exhausts itself in self-maintenance is not of much account. If Christ when upon earth spent most of His time healing the sick, cleansing the lepers,

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ministering to the poor, then His Church may well conclude that such service ranks high in the thought of God. If, discussing one of the most sacred of Hebrew institutions—the Sabbath—in relation to the doing of works of mercy, the Master saw more holiness in the deed than in the day, the sacredness of all our institutions ought similarly to be adjudged and illustrated.

A Prophetic Movement in the Churches.

These, and feelings kindred to these, are happily and healthily spreading. perhaps they are the first signs of an entirely new tone and judgment in matters religious, such a new tone as shall make a Christian man feel ashamed of the narrow conventionalisms which once exhausted his ideas of piety, and increasingly appreciative of the truth that God is more worshipped, and the world brought nearer to the issue of its long travail by an act of self-sacrifice or a deed of kindly assistance, than by emotional fervour in the singing of a hymn or rapt attention to a chairman's address. Ah, my brothers, the Spirit of God is grandly working in the opening of eyes and the stirring of hearts to-day! Maybe, if we let Him teach us in His own way, He will advance presently to show us how and where most wisely to embody in action those divine desires after true human service

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which have taken possession of our hearts. For there is the point of our hesitation and difficulty at the present moment—not in the absence of desire to work for the Kingdom, but in understanding of where to begin and what to do.

The Notes of Prophetic Religion.

Do not let it be supposed that in speaking thus I mean to suggest that the Churches are only now for the first time waking up to these wider departments of service. What I am endeavouring to emphasise is, that we have reached an epoch of new opportunity, that it is opening to us new and unfamiliar modes of service, and that we need grace and wisdom to learn with patience how to take the lead for Christ and men. The Churches of Christ have ever been the pioneers of righteousness, justice, mercy, progress! The sanctity of child-life, the elevation of woman, the emancipation of the slave, the spread of education, the rights of the poor, the claims of the sick, the sympathetic treatment of the unfortunate and wayward, have ever been among the objects of Christian thought and care. But without pretending to an exhaustive and absolutely accurate classification, it may with truth be said that most of the Christian humanities of the past have taken the form of remedial and curative service.

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Our Problems Constructive.

To-day the problem is far more one of prevention than of cure. We are asked, and we admit the justice of the demand, to obviate the need for comparison by the establishment of righteousness; to turn our strength upon the spring of mischief rather than upon the amelioration of its effects; to build a new city, and not merely to repair the breakages in one that is old. There lies the difficulty of our present problem. But with prayer and patience we shall learn to-day, as our fathers have learned in the

past, how to embody the spirit of Christian service in appropriate and fitting forms of Christian endeavour. Meanwhile, the Gospel of the grace of God must be preached with more simplicity, directness, and fulness than before. The Christian disciple must be charged with a sense of obligation to express his piety in work, and to expend his work upon the problems of life. Our Churches must be directed to face the social conditions of men, and the actual relations of life—not as questions lying outside the Gospel, but close to the very heart of the Kingdom of God. The Churches exist to create the Kingdom. Let the Churches dress themselves, and bear themselves as servants and workmen of the Kingdom, and they will once again be in fact

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what they are now in idea—the conservators of justice, the pioneers of progress, the friends and helpers of humanity, the pride and the glory of Christ.

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THE CONFESSION OF A COUNTY UNION SECRETARY.

By Rev. William Hewgill, M.A.

[The following extract from an Address to the Bolton District Union of Churches by the Rev. Wm. Hewgill, M.A., is valuable as an expression of the judgment of a successful and honoured District Secretary of the largest and most thoroughly organised of all the County Unions. Mr. Hewgill has now retired from active service, and is able to see the work of the past in perspective.—ED.]

IN all seriousness we must ask ourselves whether our Independency or Congregationalism is or is not capable of evolution? Have our principles received their fullest development? There are still men who make a fetish of their so-called

Independency. They are idolaters of a name. They are in the succession of men who have looked upon every form and degree of Congregational Union as anti-scriptural, and have refused to admit the idea of development in any form, We have to say whether these men shall lay down the lines of our future policy and determine

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the conditions of our denominational existence and action.

Egotism our Curse.

I doubt whether we can continue to be altogether Independents of the type of which our forefathers were noble illustrations. Our present convictions, as a body, are against this. We are convinced we are not as efficient as we ought to be in the furtherance of the Kingdom of God. We see other Churches doing work on this behalf which we feel we ought also to be doing, but somehow we cannot do it. We are convinced we are not as united as we might be, and should be, if the Spirit of Christ lived and reigned in all our hearts. Self-regard, self-seeking, keep both ministers and churches from loving union in prayer, service, and sacrifice. At the heart of the fair fruit Independency there is the worm self, and this spoils the whole. We are convinced also that in these respects we are capable of improvement, and are almost ready now to follow anyone who can lead us into a sure and certain way of improvement.

The Verdict of History.

We may improve our constitution and our methods. How? By more boldly and thoroughly following the lead of those who have gone before

us during the past hundred years. The history of this Union, now ninety-six years old, and its

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predecessors—"The Association of Congregational Churches," formed in 1786, and the Itinerant Society, formed in 1801,—and the history of the Congregational Union of England and Wales since its formation in 1831, prove both the need and benefit of co-operation and organisation: and how vain were the fears of those who saw in organisation a peril to the spiritual autonomy of the individual church!

We hardly need fear to tread in the same path. We are being driven by the trend of opinion and the logic of facts to the conclusion that some denominational reconstruction, some further organisation, is necessary, and must be attempted. This, it must be admitted, will mean, in a sense, more connexionalism, a deeper and more potent feeling that we belong to one another, and are organic parts of one great whole.

Essence and Accident.

It means, too, the surrender of some Church prejudices and traditions we have been wont to consider as of the essence of Independency. We may, I think, look with equanimity upon the Congregational Union of England and Wales in organising itself, or being organised by the Churches, still further on the lines of the County Unions. These organise themselves for the same purposes as Parliament is called together, "for

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the despatch of business," and "the discussion of public questions." The County Unions are organised for work, they adopt and enforce laws,

in relation to the ministry, sustentation, and conditions of membership.

It is worshipping a fetish to say the Congregational Union can never be anything else but a talking assembly. We are invited now to consider how we can best make it something more, and so increase the spiritual vigour and effectiveness of our churches.

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DR. HANNAY'S AIM.

(1890.)

IT is unfortunate that no complete account of Dr. Hannay's aim by himself has been preserved. He seems to have expressed himself more freely on his denominational ideals in private than in public. While in his speeches he had frequent occasion to apply his ideals to points at issue, and although the Church Aid Society grew under his hand into its present form, no single instance has come to notice when he delivered his whole mind on the subject in a single speech or article. At the same time, it is hardly fitting that any sketch of the growth of denominational sentiment, however slight, should appear without some reference to his name. In default of a personal utterance, the best available substitute is an interpretation of his aims by one who knew and understood them well. The following extract from the address given by Dr. Fairbairn at the funeral service at Crouch End on 17th November 1890, gives a vivid

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impression of the work which Dr. Hannay aimed at accomplishing:—

> "It was when Dr. Hannay was called to the office that he filled until death bade him

lay it down that he found the true work that God meant for him. This is no place to say one word of eulogy of a man whose deeds are known and admired. Only let this be said: it was an office hard to fill, easy to abuse or degrade, but he filled it with the mind of a statesman, the heart of a humble Christian brother, and the skill of a great general. He so filled it that he made that office grow a perfect expression of the man—a means of many-handed usefulness. It would have been so easy to become the mere official, but an official he never became. He, in all he did, in all he was, loved great principles, sought great ends. Never, amid all the details of an office made up of details, did he lose hold of the clear principles that can alone guide the spirit into truth.

"He loved our faith, the evangelic faith by which sinful men are saved; he loved our churches, where the polity being noble, mean men may so degrade it—a polity that needs noble men to be its adequate administrators; he loved our history, what the fathers had

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been and done and thought and attempted for our English people. And he came into his office, and he lived in it, feeling as if the feats of the past were nothing to the possibilities of the present, and that the measure of duty was the circle of possibility. See how he conceived and did!

"He did not love a mechanical unity, sacrifice the living unity to a corporate uniformity, but he loved union—the unity of helpful brotherhood. There was no man in obscurest pastorate that had not in him a thoughtful and a loving brother. There is no man in distinguished position that had not in him a ready and a competent counsellor. He saw with statesman instinct that rich and potent churches could not live in isolation, that churches poor and scattered and isolated could not live in strength when sapped by poverty and need. His aim and his love

and his great desire was to turn the strength of the strong into the support of the weak, and turn the love of the weak into the encouragement of the mighty.

"He loved the churches and he lived for the churches that he loved; and in many a lone parsonage and many a rural village the name of Hannay ought to be remembered as the name

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of one who in England, face to face with the rising tide of things sacerdotal, face to face with the rising tide of things evil and lustful, would have made one great living spirit of helpful brotherhood dwell in all our churches, and stretch, from strength and wealth, helpful and generous hands to feebleness and yet expectant brotherhood.

"Not only did he seek to bring the varied churches of England into unity and desire fraternity,—far further did his great ambition go. He had seen beyond the Atlantic our kin; he had visited them, looked upon the wondrous work they did in creating an order of people, educating a people, and by a free church in a free state making a happier and more aggressive faith and rule. He had visited our daughters and dependencies, and had seen how they struggled, and how the churches still created order and held aloof the torch of light and truth. And then his dream was to bring all kindred churches together, and help them, in the face of the English people, to feel one spirit, possessed by one faith, working for one end, all in Christ and Christ in all."

Dr. Fairbairn adds, in sending this reference, "Dr. Hannay's mind on this matter is my own."

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The following letters from Dr. Mackennal help to throw light on the mind of one of the few eminent denominational statesmen God has given to our Churches. Dr. Mackennal says:—

"In early years I was an extreme Independent, and I was so in the interest of Catholicity. I loved to think that there was nothing between the Local Church and the Church Universal,—the fellowship in heaven and on earth. I refused, on the platform of the Congregational Union, the name *body* to the Congregational denomination: 'There is one body—the body is of Christ.' I also dreaded the appeal to the *esprit de corps,* lest zeal for a denominational unity should take the place of devotion to the things of the spirit. I had many talks with Hannay on this subject; and we did not disagree—scarcely differed—except in the extent to which we should yield to diffidence or cherish confidence. In one of these talks he said, I am as opposed as you to a body that *we* can organise; but I believe in a Spiritual Body.' He had a way of smiling half humorously, half reverently, when he brought a great truth down to common needs; and he smiled so when he said this. His idea of Congregational organisation was just this

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—a Spiritual Body, something more than a μορφὴ, but not a σῶμα."

Dr. Hannay's expression "a Spiritual Body" describes very happily the ideal unity, the realisation of which must precede every attempt to give it expression. Although Congregationalists love to show their independence of judgment by detecting and discussing differences, there is more substance in our community of spiritual experience and inheritance than in our differences. The churches of our denomination have gradually come to share really, though not exclusively, common ideas, common principles, common traditions, and, to some extent, common aims; they have been brought up to admire the same heroes, listened to the same preachers; they have read the same books, shared similar experiences, and over-

come dfnculties in much the same way; to some extent they have joined in the same prayers, and have gradually established a common *ethos* in Christian life and character. The fundamental element in this unity is their unity in Christ and common attitude to Him; insensibly out of this grows every other common sentiment and aim.

It is out of such elements that a Spiritual Body, or common soul, is constructed; and, as Kingsley used to maintain, when the soul has come into existence, it proceeds to build up a body in which

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it can live. The step for which our churches are now waiting is the general recognition of the Spiritual Body,—the common soul. They will then willingly let the soul organise a body in accordance with its needs; and if the body be a true organ for the soul, it will continually grow, and add to itself new efficiencies. If the spirit of the body can live in such a man as Dr. Hannay, and be to him a great and commanding reality, presumably many may be found, and in ever increasing numbers, in whom it will live and who will express its meaning in word and act.

The following letter[1] is quoted as throwing light on the aims of Dr. Hannay in starting the Church Aid Society. It also suggests the reflection that the reason for the comparative inefficiency of the Church Aid Society lies not in the principles or intentions it was intended to express, but in the fact that, for various reasons, the organisation adopted did not adequately express the principles which the founders of the Society had admitted and adopted:—

> "Dr. Parker, in his October address, quoted Dr. Hannay as saying that the Church Aid Scheme had been launched twenty years too soon. That is true; but we must not suppose

[1] This letter appeared in the *Examiner*.

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that the world has been standing still, and that the organisation which would have been sufficient twenty years ago is enough for to-day. It is one of the conspicuous merits of Dr. Parker's proposal that it recognises this, and we shall not be wise unless we recognise it too.

"All through the last generation there was manifest a great awakening of the consciousness of nationality. In thoughtful men it took the form of a new sense of national responsibility. Our fathers shrank from any endeavour on the part of churches to impress the law of Christ on the corporate life of the nation; some of them would have repudiated the endeavour as inconsistent with the central idea of Congregationalism. We, on the other hand, are possessed by a passion to do this. Our religious obligations—in evangelisation, in efforts after a higher social morality—are, we feel, towards all our fellow-countrymen; we hold as sacred as ever the idea of the local church, but our Christian obligations are not local, nor must our activities and sympathies be so. Aspirations on the national scale require plans and methods on the national scale. We cannot reach the needs of England by the action of

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local committees simply; we want a larger administration, a wisdom and an oversight able to direct the enthusiasm we would invoke, and to use the local agencies in pursuance of a common purpose,

"Twenty-five years ago I was going about the country a great deal, advocating the formation of the Church Aid Society, sometimes in company with Dr. Hannay, sometimes at his bidding. The platform work was easy. We could always win a response when we spoke of the needs of England, and the claims

of the poorer on the richer churches. But in the conferences which followed I did not find myself so much at home. The sense of responsibility which we succeeded in awakening in men of wealth, and the officers of wealthy churches, became critical; their consciences were not satisfied with giving large sums, they wanted to know how those sums were to be employed, and I could not make myself say that our methods were on the scale of our enthusiasm, or that our administrative wisdom was equal to our good intention. Modestly, but in all good faith, I affirm my conviction that here was one reason of the comparative failure of the Church Aid scheme; the appeal was on the national scale, the administration

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was—if I may use the word without offence—parochial, diocesan.

"Between 1881 and 1901 there has been a great revival of denominational loyalty. The National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches, both in idea and in fact, appeals to the denominational sentiment, and seeks after the efficiency of all the denominations. If our denomination has any service it can render to the sister churches and to the nation, we ought to make it as effective as possible. And denominational efficiency to-day does not depend merely on the ideas we expound, but on our success in making our churches and our religious organisations worthy of men's regard. We shall bring no strength to the Catholic Church, we shall do no efficient service to the nation, if we suffer societies of our own name to languish for the moral and material aid we can render them.

"One of our starting-points in practical discussion ought, in my opinion, to be that a congregational minister is a minister of the denomination, and not simply the pastor of a church. I would maintain the old protest—Puritan as well as Separatist—against ordaining ministers 'at large'; but when a

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minister is ordained to a charge, his status, his sustenance, his efficiency and that of the Church he serves, are matters of denominational as well as local concern. I should welcome the adoption by us of the custom of the Methodist Churches and the Free Churches of Scotland, by which every pastor is entitled to a minimum stipend from a common fund, and actually receives it.

"But if the method of 'grants in aid' is preferred, those grants should be equitable, not eleemosynary. I never sit in County Union Committee, determining grants, without a feeling of pain: that I should have to investigate schedules, and question delegates, about men who are as worthy of confidence as I am, and churches about whose self-respect I am as sensitive as about my own. The great inequality between Congregational ministers—which is almost as manifest and as invidious as in the Established Church—will never be removed until, through the influence of our methods, we have abolished the habit of regarding fellow-ministers as deserving objects of our kindly help.[1]

[1] In the case of a Sustentation Fund remitting quarterly amounts to all ministers, all churches would presumably be required to furnish similar financial information.

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"Of course, an equitable claim carries with it the necessity of a real—not a perfunctory—method of recognition of ministers as Congregational; and on all grounds it would be well for us to be forced to consider that question. But our eleemosynary method is itself unfavourable, in a few cases disastrous, to the efficiency and self-respect of ministers. I would, if I could, gather all the funds to which ministers now make appeal for gifts, by themselves or by their friends, into a sustentation fund; and I believe the Court of Chancery or the Charity Commissioners would sanction such a proposal if the fund

which they supplemented were such as to secure a minimum income for each minister's decent livelihood. And then I would insist that the denomination should itself, through its representatives, determine who should have a right to share in such a fund.

"There is another lesson which the experience of the last twenty years has taught us: the competition of our denominational societies has become excessive, and so are the demands made by favoured localities on funds raised for general denominational purposes. The Jubilee Fund of 1881 was a sorrow instead of a comfort to Dr. Hannay, because during

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his absence in Australia it was diverted from national to local objects. And the unseemly contention of 1899 will not soon be forgotten. The representatives of the churches should, in my judgment, administer all the funds which are raised in answer to denominational appeals.

"A. MACKENNAL."

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An Intercession for Churches or Christ.

I.

PERMIT Thy servant, O God, to present before Thee the whole body of churches of the faith and order which he loves. The life I now present before Thee is life of their life; the spirit of him who prays is one with their spirit. Accept for them the intercession of Thy servant as though they prayed with his voice. Thou art Author of their life, the Fountain of their being, the Breath of their strength and power. They were called into being by the operation of Thy Spirit in the hearts of men, and gathered together that

they might witness to the sole supremacy and infinite grace of Thy Son our Lord. To Thee they have witnessed in many generations amid persecutions, and misunderstandings, and limitations hard to bear. Grant us now, I beseech Thee, a great liberation by Thy Spirit. Open our hearts to the incoming of the Divine life. Let us not dwell any longer in the limitations of our unspiritual natures. Make us men after Thine own heart—men of understanding, quickened in the Spirit, and perfect in heart before Thee. Grant that rapidly, and as by the movement of Thy breath upon the souls of men, large numbers of men and women in our churches may be born into the life of sonship to God through Christ, and may become forgetful of self, conscious of Thee, responsive to Thy ways and works, obedient to Thy calls.

Unite the churches by new ties of faith and sacrificial service, that they may be full of faith and large in charity. So take them up into Thine eternal purpose and will that they may be used to strengthen and reestablish the religious life of the English people everywhere.

Through Jesus Christ. Amen.

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An Intercession for Churches or Christ.

II.

AGAIN I would present before Thee the life of the churches which I love and desire to serve; for the need is great and the time is rich in opportunity. Everywhere men are feeling their need of Thee, groping in the darkness for the Eternal Light; and the nation is drifting backwards for want of a new Breath of God.

If it be Thy will, O God, build up in our churches a new nation for Thy service. Take our young men and women in the fulness and strength of youth, and lead them to consecrate themselves to the service of God and of man. Take our manhood and womanhood and establish in us Thy spiritual kingdom, that righteousness,

purity, soberness, wisdom, brotherhood, mutual helpfulness may build up characters fit for the highest uses of a nation's life. Help us to witness in deed, and thought, and word, to the supremacy of the Spirit, Holy and Eternal, and the reality of the spiritual kingdom. Teach us how to speak of Thee that men may understand. Show us how to shape our lives, our commerce, our organisations, our literature by the laws of the spiritual kingdom, that men may be led to find in all a testimony to that which is eternal. Make our fellowship rich in the sense that it is a fellowship in spiritual gifts and heavenly graces, and make us strong that we may bear one another's burdens.

Through Jesus Christ. Amen.

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PART II.

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DEVELOPMENT IN CONGREGATIONALISM.

THE progress of the endeavour to bring the Congregational churches in England into a closer union, and to organise their common work more efficiently, is of great interest to all who watch the historical development of Christian communities. The Congregational churches of England already look back upon a history of more than three hundred years, and they have made no small contribution to the sum of the religious life of England. During this time they have maintained religious and social fellowship with one another, but, in spite of many impulses towards closer union, they have held in theory, though less exclusively in practice, the principle of the in-

dependence of each Christian community. They have maintained that their conception of the Christian Church as a fellowship of believers in Christ is both primitive and apostolic; and it is, perhaps, some support to that contention that they are now feeling, as the primitive and apostolic

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Christian Churches did in their own time, the need of some organic expression of their corporate life and united interests.

The comparison is instructive both for its similarities and its differences. It was an underlying solidarity, of which the Churches in the first three centuries grew more and more conscious, which at length brought them together in councils; and gradually established the sense of a corporate unity which included, without destroying, the personal identity and individual character of the separate churches. But the unity in their case was episcopal, realised through authoritative officials. The Congregational churches are spiritually-governed democracies, and the organ of their unity must be of the same order and nature as the churches. Our principles include and emphasise unity, but make the bond ethical and spiritual first, and only organic afterwards. In the early Church it was the pressure of controversies about faith, and the decision of nice points of doctrine, which supplied the impulse towards union, and the process was complicated and vitiated by being confused with political issues and a State connection. Now the impulse comes from the desire to organise more efficiently the work of the churches for the advancement of the Kingdom of God, and to regulate and maintain in health and vigour all the

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organs by which the churches act on the nation, and the community outside themselves. It is a

new phase of that Congregational principle which Louis du Moulin described in the words, "Their order is to do all things decently and in order."[1]

The fact that the Congregational churches have lived and grown for three hundred years is a valid proof of the principle for which they stand, that such communities are competent to discharge the functions of a Church. What Newman described as the test of "chronic continuance" has been applied with success. Generations of good men and women have grown up within their borders; have felt the full power of the Christian Gospel; and have become valiant in faith, strong in character, catholic in sympathies, evangelical in teaching, under the influence of the Christian life as it is realised in Congregational churches.

What is now called in question is not the truth of their theory, but its completeness. It is maintained as zealously as ever, that a church is a Christian fellowship, in which all the members must be in fellowship with God in Christ if they are to maintain true fellowship with one another. This is the indispensable basis of all church life, whether on a large or small scale. But a found-

[1] Cf. *Evolution of Congregationalism*.—MACKENNAL.

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ation must be distinguished from a superstructure. To a Congregationalist, the Anglican Church appears to be a superstructure without a foundation; for membership has no necessary connection with Christian experience or belief. On the other hand, Congregationalism is a foundation with very little built upon it, or only a very irregular superstructure. As a force on public opinion at home and beyond the English coasts, it is ineffective out of all proportion to its real strength. It is now increasingly recognised that the very claims which

are made for a Church consisting of believers in Christ, should carry such churches a great deal further in the service of God's Kingdom than they have ever gone.

A more adequate, because more vital, analogy than that of a building, is the analogy from nature's method of construction. The fellowship of Christian disciples united in Christ and drawing on Him for their life, is in the Kingdom of God what the cell is in nature. It is the simplest and most indestructible association of atoms having life in itself. Wherever it is found, the Christian life is there in its characteristic features, and it is also indispensable in the highest and most perfectly developed forms of the Christian community. If this claim be true, a Christian fellowship will prove its vitality by its power of uniting with other

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such loving units without losing its individual character. Out of such units may be built a complete corporate life. A process of development will go on, in Herbert Spencer's famous phrase, "from indefinite incoherent homogeneity to definite coherent heterogeneity of structure and function." That is to say, the churches will go on to realise a complete corporate life, living more abundantly through one another than they could do independently, and equipped with organs such as may enable them to exert the maximum of Christian influence on their environment.

The sense of the need of such development has been expressed repeatedly by the leaders of Congregational churches during the last forty years. The first expression known to the present writer is from the chair of the Congregational Union in 1862, by the Rev. James Miall.[1] The latest and most emphatic is in the two addresses by Dr. Parker during 1901. And now, at length, the forces which make for union as a supplement to

Independency seem to be overcoming the prejudices which construe Independency as a disintegrating isolation. Those who are watching the progress of events at present will recall the enchantment of Newman's description of the progress of an idea, and will see in the present

[1] See page 56.

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discussion an interesting illustration of the process which Newman describes:—

> "When an idea is of a nature to interest and possess the mind, it is said to have life, that is, to live in the mind which is recipient of it. Let one such idea get possession of the popular mind, or the mind of any set of persons, and it is not difficult to understand the effects which will ensue. There will be general agitation of thought, and an action of mind both upon itself and upon other minds. New lights will be brought to bear upon the original idea, aspects will multiply, and judgments will accumulate. There will be a time of confusion when conceptions and misconceptions are in conflict; and it is uncertain whether anything is to come of the idea at all, or which view of it is to get the start of the others. After a while some definite form of doctrine [opinion] emerges; and as time proceeds, one view of it will be modified or expanded by another, and then combined with the third, till the idea in which they centre will be to each man separately what at first it was only to all together. It will be surveyed too in its relation to other doctrines or facts, to other natural laws or established rules, to the

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> varying circumstances of times and places, to other religions, polities, philosophies, as the case may be. How it stands affected towards other systems, how it affects them, how far it coalesces with them, how far it

tolerates, when it interferes with them, will be gradually brought out.

"It will be questioned and criticised by enemies and explained by well-wishers. The multitude of opinions concerning it in these respects and many others, will be collected, compared, sifted, selected or rejected, and gradually attached to it, or separated from it, in the minds of individuals and of the community. It will in proportion to its native vigour and subtlety introduce itself into the framework and details of social life, change public opinion, and support or undermine the foundations of the existing order.

"Thus in time it grows into an ethical code, or into a system of government, or into a theology, or into a ritual, according to its capabilities. And this system, or body of thought, theoretical or practical, thus laboriously gained, will after all be only the adequate representation of the original idea, being nothing else than what that very idea meant from the first—its exact image as seen

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in a combination of most diversified aspects, with the suggestions and corrections of many minds and the illustrations of many trials.

"This process is called the development of an idea; being the germination, growth, and perfection of some living, that is influential, truth, or apparent truth, in the minds of men during a sufficient period. And it has this necessary characteristic, that, since its province is the busy scene of public life, it cannot develop at all except either by destroying or modifying and incorporating with itself existing modes of thinking and acting."[1]

This is the process through which the idea, which is described conveniently, but somewhat improperly, as the "United Congregational Church" has been passing.[2] It is an endeavour to unite in theory and in practice two conceptions which have hitherto

been regarded in the popular mind as incompatible; the autonomy of the local church, and the full organic development of the corporate consciousness of a large fellowship of churches. Should the Congregational churches succeed in working out a solution of this problem, they will probably at the same time supply the model on which a great

[1] "Essay on Development in Christian Doctrine," p. 35.
[2] See chapter entitled "Wanted: A Name."

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Free Evangelical Church of England may one day be constituted.

The questions now under discussion are so many, that it is very important to see them in their proper proportion. Nothing could be less true than that the questions are chiefly concerned with ministerial status. It should primarily be regarded as a great missionary movement, and concerned with the ministry only, so far as ministers are the recognised organ of the churches' life and activity.

The proposals are, in the order of importance, to form a National Council composed of representatives nominated by the churches, and chosen by the County Unions; and to give this Council certain functions in directing the policy of the societies which form the organs of the Congregational churches for Home, Foreign and Colonial Missions, and for Church Extension; to make it the organ of the work of the denomination in matters of national interest; to give it also certain authority in dealing with admission to the ministry, the sustentation of ministers and churches, appointments and removals in the churches of the denomination, and the superannuation of ministers. The general aim of the movement may be described as an endeavour to bring administrative system and order into all those activities and interests which the churches have in common, and to

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regulate the growth and development of the organs of the churches' life, with a view to making them more efficient as instruments in the work of the Kingdom of God.

Apart from the details of organisation, with which this volume does not attempt to deal, there are two questions of importance involved in the new development. It is important to determine its true nature. Does it bring the Church into a truer relation to the Kingdom of God, or to those eternal principles which lie behind and above all ecclesiastical questions? The other question is equally important: Is it a true development, bringing out on a higher plane, for operation on a wider sphere, the elements which have been the life of Congregational churches for three hundred years? Is it a religious development, or a development of machinery? Is it constructive or corruptive?

The fact that the environment in which churches do their work changes from time to time, that churches are living entities, and that larger views come to be entertained by those who are working within the churches, are themselves sufficient to account for the developments which take place from time to time in all religious communities. To be perfect is to have changed often; and incapacity to make alterations of this kind is always

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either a cause or a sign of decay. But general considerations are of little use in determining the real nature or import of the proposed changes. In what follows an endeavour is made to inquire into their real nature, and test their fidelity to the genius of Congregationalism as seen in its history.

Developments in Christian communities may be classified in the order of their importance as—(1) Spiritual, (2) Doctrinal, (3) Moral, (4) Organic, (5) Ritual. The order in which they stand is determined by their relation to one another.

The relation of a spiritual development to doctrinal and other developments is obscure, in the same sense that the spiritual life itself is mystical and obscure. Our acquaintance with it is empirical. In certain cases we can trace the relation of cause and effect, and in others it seems to elude us. Doctrine is the sediment in the mind left by spiritual experience. Moral developments are often, but not exclusively, the result of developments on the higher plane. Organic developments, as in the case of Foreign Missions, are very often, though not always, caused by fresh stirrings of the spiritual life. The relation of ritual to spiritual development is the most remote, and perhaps the most obscure of all; for, to some, ritual is the prop by which the spiritual

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life supports itself until it be grown, and to others it is the conventionalism which substitutes an artificial form for a living reality.

For the present purpose it is sufficient to notice that while the spiritual is related to all the other forms of development, each is sufficiently distinct from the others to be treated as separate; each has laws of its own; and, while there can be no development without some reaction on all parts of the life of the community, it leads to an inevitable confusion if we do not treat them as separate in the mind. It is no reply to demands for improvment in organisation to say that churches need a spiritual revival; nor is it a legitimate excuse for refusing the invitation to enter the spiritual kingdom, that the organisation of a church to

which we belong is exceedingly bad. The realm of the Spirit has its own laws, privileges, and life: organisation must be compared with organisation, and judged by its results in its own sphere. Successful church life demands attention to both, and is impossible without either.

If a large business is well organised, it is likely to succeed for a longer or shorter time, even though its principal be of doubtful moral character, and if a large church is badly organised, it is no excuse for the church that its members have a highly-developed

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spiritual life: the penalties of bad organisation will fall on it in spite of the purity and the dignity of its principles. Ultimately the members will suffer by having their fellowship destroyed because they were not careful enough to attend to matters in the lower ranges of organisation. It is in this way that planes of life, in themselves distinguishable, react upon one another. Churches which value highly the principles for which they stand show their appreciation of their principles best, not by talking about them and relying on them solely to promote themselves, but by using the best and most effective methods of organisation to spread their principles, and bring the minds of men under their power.

Spiritual Development.

At the fountain-head of all true developments are those which can only be classed as Spiritual. Religion is a life in relation to God, and the Christian religion is a life in relation to God in Christ. That relation is direct, immediate, personal, and, like all personal relations, is susceptible of change from time to time. It may pass into close and ever closer intimacy, deeper and more perfect assimilation with the person and character of Christ;

or the relation may be retrogressive, and become more distant, remote, and formal with the process of time. A true spiritual development takes place

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when the relation of a community to its Lord enters upon some deeper phase, some fresh experience and apprehension of the power and love and work of God in Christ. When, for instance, in persecution a community passes "deeper into the death of Christ, into which they have been baptised, and comes to have what the mystics call some 'relish of the Cross'"; or when, as at Pentecost, a prolonged period of prayer is followed by a demonstration of the Spirit with power; or when, as in the experience of the Moravian Church at Hernhutt, and many times since in our own land, a deep sense of fellowship with God has resulted in the birth of evangelising or missionary energies. Wherever there is what the mystics call permanent conversion—that is a life lived steadily Godwards—development in some upward direction always takes place.

In the present case the movement for a closer union amongst Congregational churches is probably to be classed as an effect of, and related to, a spiritual cause which has now been in operation for some years. Looking back over the Christian literature of the last twenty-five years, there is no doubt that one of the experiences which has been most vividly impressed upon the leaders of Congregationalism has been that of the unity of Christian men and Christian

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communities in Christ; the realised solidarity of life, as soon as it becomes life in the spiritual order and kingdom. There is a remarkable sermon on the "Unity of the Church" by Dr. Dale, published in the volume entitled *Fellowship with*

Christ. It is too long to quote in such a way as to give an adequate conception of its argument, but two or three sentences may indicate the nature of its teaching:—

> "His [Christ's] first prayer is that all who believe in Him may be one with each other, ... That their union with each other may correspond to the union between Himself and the Father, and this unity of the Church is to be realised in God. It is as if our union with God were not an end in itself, but simply the means of our communion with each other. Of course it is not really so, but it is clear that the end of Christ is to make us one with each other as well as one with God. ... We were created that we might have eternal communion with each other.
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> "Not individualism but communism,[1] extending through the whole of the interests

[1] Judging from conversation and correspondence on this subject, Dr. Dale had no sympathy with political communism or socialism, so that his use of the word here is all the more emphatic.—ED.

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> and activities of human life, is the Divine idea of the Universe. The Divine idea has not been achieved. It has been thwarted; its fulfilment delayed by the abnormal history of the human race. But Christ came to destroy sin which separates us from each other as well as from God, and to draw the race into the unity to which it was created.
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> "Listen to His own account of the way in which He is doing it, which is very wonderful It is a part of the Gospel which few of us, I imagine, have ever heartily received; but when once we receive it, all our thoughts of man and of God and of our relations to both are changed: 'The glory which Thou hast given Me I have given them, that they all may be one.' The glory is come in *this* life to those who believe in Christ: for one

of the effects of giving it is declared to be the discovery by the world that Christ was Son of God; the success of Christian missions at home and abroad, according to the words of Christ, is to be the result of the community of the Church; and He makes the Church one by giving to all that believe in Him the glory which the Father had given to Him. The glory must therefore be given

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here and *now,* not merely as a future inheritance, but as a present possession; not merely as something sacred and mysterious and suspected, or known only to ourselves, but as something so conspicuous that it is to change the commonplace world into Christian faith. ... The elevation of those who believe in Christ into union with each other and with God, is a wonderful manifestation of the power of Christ as the Saviour of the world. It is a present revelation of God to mankind. ...

"We must escape from that spirit of individualism which in its excess has been one of the chief evils of the modern Church. In the discipline of the Christian life there must be as serious an attempt to perfect our communion with each other as to perfect our communion with God. We must draw together man to man, every one of us to his Christian brother in the same Church, that in the act of the Christian Society to which we belong the Divine idea may be fulfilled; and then the larger and wider unity would begin to be revealed."[1]

These, and passages like them, are expressions of the mystical union with other believers, which

[1] *Fellowship with Christ,* p. 308.

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is realised sooner or later by men who exercise the prayer of faith. Wherever it is realised men return with something of repulsion to the facts

of the Christian life as they are forced to see them. Jealousies, rivalries, egotisms, individualisms, separations, cliques, the inequalities created by great discrepancies of income and social position, and the factitious gulfs which hinder or break brotherhood, all jar with fresh painfulness on the soul which has been rejoicing in the communion of saints; and instinctively the mind turns to feel after methods which may liberate it from these hindrances to realising an essential feature of the Christian life.

All such teaching and experience has been reinforced by the emphasis which many of our leaders have taught us to lay on the solidarity of mankind; echoing in this, as Dr. Mackennal has recently pointed out in his *Evolution of Congregationalism,*[1] the teaching of Frederick Denison Maurice, which found more hospitality amongst Congregationalists than in his own communion.

Doctrinal Development.

The relation of doctrinal development to spiritual is happily expressed by Newman in a passage which, with the alteration of a modern word for an older one, puts very clearly the relation

[1] Mackennal, *Evolution of Congregationalism,* p. 202.

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between the three factors involved in such development: the object contemplated, the mind contemplating, and the product of contemplation:—

> "The mind which is habituated to the thought of God, of Christ, of the Holy Spirit, naturally turns with a devout curiosity to the contemplation of the object of its adoration, and begins to form statements concerning it before it knows whither or how far it will be carried. One proposition necessarily leads to

> another, and a second to a third, then some limitation is required; and the combination of these opposites occasions some fresh evolutions from the original idea which, indeed, can never be said to be entirely exhausted. This process is its development, and results in a series, or rather body, of dogmatic statements, till what was an impression on the imagination [consciousness] has become a system or creed in the reason."

Such a view of the origin and nature of dogma carries with it the implication, that with a developing experience of spiritual things must go a developing creed; and exactly coincides with the attitude towards doctrinal development which the Congregational churches have taken since their origin. As has recently been pointed out

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by Professor Percy Gardner,[1] the Congregational churches present the remarkable phenomenon of a Christian community which has maintained a full and catholic expression of the Christian faith for three hundred years, without imposing on, or demanding from, any of its members the signature or confession of a creed. The maintenance of a spiritual fellowship has proved a sufficient safeguard.

With this position the present development in Congregationalism is in entire agreement. If a national council be called into existence, or a sustentation scheme established, it will be recognised that these move in another sphere than that of doctrine. Doctrinal development will be left to take place with the same freedom as before, the members of the churches relying on the maintenance of a spiritual fellowship for the substantial orthodoxy of the churches which are thus united.

Moral Development.

Moral developments take place from time to time in a Christian community when the conscience of the community, under the educative influence of a fellowship which centres in Christ, agrees in condemning some evil or accepting

[1] In his *Exploratio Evangelica,* p. 471. "Almost without external organisation they have kept, for century after century, in fairly steadfast lines of doctrine and practice, by the continued inspiration which has flowed from the study of Scripture."

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some duty. Many interesting illustrations might be given, showing how the standard of morality varies in different Christian communities on important points, owing to the gradual formation of Christian judgments, and their conservation in the practice and traditions of churches. Thus, for instance, in most Congregational churches, active participation in the liquor traffic is regarded as a bar, practically insuperable, to office in the Church; but it is not so regarded in many Presbyterian Churches, nor in the Anglican Church. Discipline is exercised in Congregational churches in the case of improper intimacy before marriage, although the parties afterwards marry; but in the Anglican Church there is practically no discipline, and in this respect it tends to lower the level of moral feeling sustained by other churches. The conscience of Christian communities in America is much more sensitive on some points than in England (such, *e.g.,* as smoking); on other points our standard is higher than theirs, as, *e.g.,* with regard to maintenance of reverential behaviour in places of worship.

While points of this kind appear to be somewhat arbitrary, and supply no absolute test to

the moral advance of a community, it is quite otherwise with regard to the recognition of social

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obligations. Shaftesbury somewhere says that virtue consists in "a man having all his affections and inclinations agreeing with the good of that system in which he is included and of which he forms a part." A man's duty is created and laid upon him by his forming part of a system. If the system be a very small one, the duty will be small and require no high moral development; but as a man sees himself in ever widening relations, duty grows with the growth of his mental vision, and it requires a real moral development to fill a place in the wider relations without neglecting the nearer. In this respect life may be likened to the converging beams of light which always seem to meet at the feet of one who watches their reflection in the water. To the watcher all the rays of light seem to converge on the point where he is standing. If the sheet of water be a small one, the rays have a short course; if it be an ocean, they seem to run into infinity.

So, the meaning of a life to itself is made up by the relationships in which it stands. The difference between one noble life and another lies less in the stern devotion to conscience, than in the magnitude of the system to which the actor sees himself as belonging. The least moral of all actions is that of a self-centred individualist, who sees himself bounded on every side by his own interest.

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Some men are educated by family life to see as far as the interests of their family, but no further. Family selfishness is higher in the moral scale than personal selfishness, but it has obvious limitations as a moral standard. It implies a larger moral life and a more complete personality to enter into the

fellowship of a Christian Church; such a fellowship requires in a very high degree the suppression of egotism, and the development of the power to live in the lives of others. And it is an undoubted step higher in the moral scale to recognise the obligations of Christian fellowship towards a great company whom we have not seen, to whom we are bound by bonds of faith and sympathy, and whom we trust, not because *we* know them, but because we believe that they know Christ and Christ knows them. This requires a high venture of faith, the faith which is the habitual trust of the soul in Love, but it is by such ventures that the real genius of Christianity has made its conquests over the world.[1]

[1] The man who dwells in love is the man who lives consistently in accordance with the rule that there is no conflict between his own private good and the good of others, in his faith that the supreme purpose of the Universe, the end which God has in view, is universal good, and who identifies himself with that great purpose. Such a man dwells in God, because by an act of faith he has been able to rise above the opposition between self and self, he has been able to reconcile egotism and altruism. He lives in the confidence that there is a final unity in which all persons are ultimately harmonised. By faith he has entered into the life of God.—D'Arcy, *Idealism and Theology,* p. 237.

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To establish such a moral standard in a great community of churches as would make this possible, would be in itself a witness to the power of the Gospel, impressive, convincing, and certain to produce an effect; and it would be an approach, however minute, yet worth making, towards the fulfilment of our Lord's Prayer, "That they may be one, even as we are one."

Ritual development is the least important, because the most superficial, of all the developments which take place in a Christian community; and, because it is the most superficial, it is the one which makes the most stir. A man must be a Christian to know the meaning of a moral or a doctrinal development; and he must be

a man of devout and spiritual mind to know the meaning of a spiritual development. But anyone can discuss a posture, or a garment, or an ornament, or a hymn, or an order of service.

The National Council of Congregational Churches will take upon itself no responsibilities for advocating or hindering, or regulating the ritual of worship. Congregational churches will remain, as they have always been, singularly free to adopt such ritual as most adequately expresses their religious life. There will probably be in the near future a tendency in the direction which is illustrated very beautifully by

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the services of Dr. Hunter. But if so, it will be because the suitability and devotional power of these services is making itself felt. If Dr. Hunter's example spread, it will be by the voluntary adoption of his methods in churches which approve of them. Ritual is an expression of taste, or the want of it; and for matters of taste there is no law, except that taste in this sense grows stronger by whatever feeds it.

Organic Development.

By separating off the spiritual, doctrinal, moral, and ritual developments from the organic, we get a true perception of the meaning of the last, and the plane on which such developments move. Twenty years ago the creation of a National Congregational Council would have been dreaded, on the ground that it would be certain to claim authority to deal with matters of faith. It has quite another aspect when it is seen that what the churches are doing is to create another administrative organ to do efficiently what they have have been doing inefficiently for a long time. They abrogate no authority, they merely

add to their powers of service; they take nothing away from the sovereignty of Christ in His Church—the Crown rights of the Redeemer,—they merely prepare for His service a great administrative department authorised to work out those

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duties which He has laid upon the consciences of His people.

The churches can no longer be satisfied to go on comparing themselves with themselves. There has been laid upon them very deeply the sense of two great relationships in which they stand—their relationship to the Kingdom of God and their relationship to the national life. With regard to the first it has become clear that the churches are constituted not for their own members only, nor merely for the sake of a life beyond the grave, but for the creation of that ideal social existence and spiritual order which Jesus Christ described as "the Kingdom of God." They are here to create a new earth and a new humanity; to establish all relations of life on the foundations of love; to bring all consciences under the dominion of a crucified Redeemer and King; to make peace, and righteousness, and truth, and the happiness of holiness, practical and constructive powers in this present life. And they are to do this not within their own walls only, or in England only, but wherever there are men who can know the grace of Christ and be conformed to His image.

With regard to the nation, they have come to recognise that they cannot adequately give the witness which God has entrusted to them, without

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sometimes making that witness heard and felt in the national counsels. They have recognised that they have a national work to do—in the army,

the navy, the schools of the country, amongst great working-class populations, in the "cities of the poor," in the universities, in the public schools. In these and many other directions there is work to be done which we can do, and if we do not do it it remains undone or is handed over to others who may do it less efficiently. The principle which is expressed in the words, "If thou altogetherholdest thy peace at this time, then shall relief and deliverance arise from another place," has been repeatedly illustrated in our history. "For in the fields which we have declined to cultivate, in many of which we were the first workers, and which we have carelessly left to themselves, God has raised up others to do our work. While we thank God for that, we value the Christianity which we represent by the word 'Congregationalism' too much not to feel that it would have been far better had we stood by our work, and reaped the harvest where we had sown the seed."

Newman's tests of a true development are worth remembering, although they were erratically applied by himself. They were—(1) Preservation of type or idea; (2) Continuity of principles; (3) Power of assimilation; (4) Early anticipation; (5) Logical

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sequence; (6) Preservative additions; (7) Chronic continuance. The titles are so well chosen that it is hardly necessary to amplify in order to understand their meaning. With the exception of the last, they may all be applied with perfect confidence to the present development in Congregationalism. The essential idea of the Congregational Church is the spiritual nature of the Church, its character as a fellowship of believers in Christ, and the competence of such a fellowship to fulfil the purposes of a Church. Whatever organisation is now introduced will be an organisation for increasing such churches in numbers and efficiency,

not for mutilating or crippling them. The present movement is in no sense a movement which adds authority to the ministerial element in the churches; it preserves authority in the centre, where it has always been assumed in Congregational history to rest, namely, in the conscience of communities enlightened by Christ. Whatever is done in the way of developing the administrative powers of representatives of the churches, can only be regarded as an endeavour to discharge more fully and adequately duties already recognised.

The Foreign Missionary Society, the Home Missionary or Church Aid Society, the Colonial Missionary Society, are organs of the churches' life for discharging their duties towards the Kingdom

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of God, though at present their connection is so little vital that they appear to be separate organisms. The ministry is the preaching organ of the churches' life, through which it bears its witness to the outer world as to faith, duty, and loyalty to Christ. What is proposed now is to give systematic thought and effort to the endeavour to make these organs of the churches' life adequate, efficient, and suitable to their purpose.

The attitude of cautious and progressive reform twelve years ago is well expressed in an article already referred to in the *Congregational Review* for January 1890, p. 22:—

"Congregationalism emphasises the spiritual bond of union. So far as government resolves itself into moral influence, it admits government on the largest scale. It prefers, however, until human nature in the Church is more controlled by the Christian spirit, to emphasise everywhere the spiritual bond of union, and to reduce *governmental* action through human agents to a minimum. The progress of society may make this latter species of

action more and more pure, and its abuses less and less probable. When government in the Church becomes perfectly safe, because it is a reflection of the mind of Christ, the difference between govern-

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mental unity and spiritual unity may become unimportant. Christ will reign by His truth and Spirit." The last twelve years have added this further step in the progress of opinion, that we are not now afraid to trust organised and even governmental methods when we are sure of the ends in view, and persuaded that the means are means to the common ends for which the churches exist.

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THE WORK OF A NATIONAL CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL.

IT is not yet clear to all Congregationalists what the work of a National Congregational Council would be. To many it appears that such a council would be almost sure to employ its time and energies in regulating the doctrinal tendencies of the ministry, or the local affairs of individual churches, or otherwise claiming the authority of a Presbyterian Assembly. Similar suspicions were excited by the formation of the National Council of the Congregational Churches of the United States. On the 14th of June 1865, five hundred and two elders and messengers, delegated by the Congregational churches of five and twenty States, met in the Old Meeting-house in Boston, to inquire into the special duties which had been imposed on those Congregational churches by the War of the Rebellion, with reference to home evangelisation in the West and South. The Council, before proceeding to deal with its duties, issued the following reassuring

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statement of the principles on which it was determined to act:—

It publicly recognised—

> "*First,* The principle that the local or Congregational church derives its power and authority directly from Christ, and is not subjected to any ecclesiastical government exterior or superior to itself.
>
> "*Second,* That every local or Congregational church is bound to observe the duties of mutual respect and charity which are included in the communion of churches one with another; and that every church which refuses to give an account of its proceedings, when kindly and orderly desired to do so by neighbouring churches, violates the law of Christ.
>
> "*Third,* That the ministry of the Gospel, by members of the churches who have been duly called and set apart to that work, implies in itself no power of government, and that ministers of the Gospel, elected to office in any church, are not a hierarchy, nor are they invested with any official power in, or over, the churches."[1]

In 1871 the rapid extension of Congregational churches in the West, and the growing sense of

[1] *Official Record, etc.,* 165; *Debates and Proceedings,* 463.

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solidarity in the denomination, led to the formation of a permanent National Council. That Council safeguarded the rights of the local churches by the following important declaration:—

> "They (the Congregational Churches of the United States, by delegation assembled) agree in belief that the right of government resides in local churches, or congregations of believers, who are responsible directly to the Lord Jesus Christ, the One Head of the Church Universal, and of all particular

churches; but that all churches, being in communion one with another, as parts of Christ's Catholic Church, have mutual duties subsisting in the obligations of fellowship. The churches, therefore, while establishing this National Council for the furtherance of the common interests and work of all the churches, do maintain the scriptural and inalienable right of each church to self-government and administration; and this National Council shall never exercise legislative or judicial authority, nor consent to act as a Council of Reference."[1] This last sentence is a literal adherence to the Congregational principle

[1] *Minutes of the National Council of the Congregational Churches of the United States of America, at the First Session, etc.* (1872), 30, 63.

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that whatever administrative body the churches may appoint, that body is not a Church; "*Quod non est Ecclesia, non potest exercere jurisdictionem Ecclesiasticam: Synodus non est Ecclesia:*"[1] *Ergo.*

It may be of some service to consider what functions would devolve on a National Council in England to-day; for it is only by carefully regarding the legitimate constructive work which needs to be done, and which is at present largely neglected or ineffectively executed, that the constitution of such a council can be properly drawn. It must be kept in view that in the Congregational Church system the function of such a council is to provide an effective method for voluntary co-operation for certain great ends, rather than to create an authority with powers of compulsion in every direction. What the churches will require from it is, that it shall contribute to the life of the denomination the maximum of helpfulness and the minimum of hindrance.

A National Council would provide a meeting-place for conference and mutual counsel for

those who are working the societies established as organs of the churches for the extension of the Kingdom. It would be primarily a great

[1] John Norton, quoted by Dexter, *Congregationalism of the Last Three Hundred Years,* p. 518.

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ganglion of the nerves which penetrate the body of the churches. There is room for close co-operation—or at least a strategic parallelism between the operations of those who are working for Home Missions, and those who are working for Foreign Missions. So that, instead of the churches being put into a false position, as apparently the legitimate prey of various alien propagandist societies, both Home and Foreign Missions should be externally, as well as really, organic parts of the Christian work which the churches legitimately regard as their own.

Similarly, Church Extension and Home Missions are two departments of one work; and there is room for much closer co-operation between those interested in one or other of them than is possible under our present organisation. The stages of church growth are perfectly well known to those who have had any share in establishing a Congregational Church. They vary slightly according to the district with which we are dealing, but they follow known and recognisable types; there is the work of the evangelist or preacher; the work of the organiser who establishes the Sunday School and forms the Church; then follows the opportunity of the building committee, which has to approve plans and raise funds; then there is the task of securing an efficient pastor, who can

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be trusted to use to the full the beginnings thus made, and to create the traditions of a progressive and evangelising church. There is work

here for several committees and different types of men, but, if it is to be done efficiently, they must be in closest co-operation, and governed by a common constructive idea, which would make impossible any personal aim, or exaltation of the hand over the foot, or the eye over the hand.

For the sake of giving definiteness to an idea, some such outline as follows might be sketched for the work of a National Congregational Council. Each department of work would naturally be made the special province of a committee, reporting annually to the full Assembly. The method of appointing such committees should provide for some continuity of policy, full responsibility to the Assembly, and some annual accessions of "new blood."

Church Extension.

1. In the matter of Church Extension it would be the duty of the Council to collect, receive, raise, and administer funds for the extension of the Kingdom of Christ by founding, building, supporting, or maintaining Congregational churches; to seek out, inspect, and report upon suitable sites and neighbourhoods for establishing such churches; to appoint and support, or partially

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support, suitable ministers in new churches during a limited term of years while a Congregational Church is being formed; to keep in view the endeavour to make each new church a centre for further evangelisation; and in any other ways to assist the progress of Congregational churches, as far as its funds permit. As far as possible this work should be done *through* existing Congregational churches, and for this purpose it should be open to the Council at any time to enter into direct

relations of partnership and co-operation with any Congregational church, or union of churches.

Home Missions.

2. To collect, receive, raise, and administer funds to assist, support, or maintain Congregational Churches, or Congregational Ministers; or Missions, Settlements, or Evangelists in rural districts or the poorer districts of large towns, or wherever the needs of the population can be shown to require such aid; to appoint and maintain Evangelists, Church Missioners, or Chaplains for work among soldiers and sailors; to co-operate with and assist all those local organisations which have Home Missions for their object; to bring together representatives of all who are working in the Home Mission field, and to provide for the mutual assistance of those who are carrying on work of this kind.

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Foreign Missions.

3. The relation of the London Missionary Society to our churches is one so singular and exceptional that it can only be modified with the greatest caution. A National Congregational Council, having for its general object and scope the endeavour to keep in touch with, and sustain, all the work of the churches for the extension of the Kingdom of God, might supply a link which is at present lacking. It would be the business of the Council to devote at least one whole sitting to the consideration of Foreign Missions; to send official representatives to the Board of Directors of the L.M.S., and to receive official representatives from that Board. The frequent presentation of the interests of Foreign Missions

as part of the work of the Council, and the association of foreign missionaries with distinguished representatives of the churches at home in its meetings, would gradually help to enlarge the view of the churches at home. It would help them to regard the Foreign Mission field as part of their own work. It would give foreign missionaries insight into the methods and movements in the home churches, and so tend to create that larger loyalty to the Spiritual Kingdom which is one of the most permanent and valuable forms of what is commonly called the "missionary spirit."

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Colonial Missions.

4. It would be the duty of a National Congregational Council to take cognizance of the interests of Congregational churches and of Congregationalists in any part of the dominions of His Majesty King Edward VII. It would thus help to remove what is felt to be a blemish on the fair fame of the Congregational churches at home by those who travel in our Colonies, that, as compared with Presbyterians and Methodists, Congregationalists abroad are apt to be "sheep without a shepherd." Without reflection in thought or word upon the work of the "Colonial Missionary Society," done under many discouragements, it is not too much to say that the work of that Society is most disappointing to those who are most interested in the cause which it is established to assist. It is simply at present one of the lesser competing denominational societies, depending too largely for its success on its power to stimulate the jaded appetite of those who attend May meetings, by special sermons from popular preachers. This is not the spirit or the method in which Congregational ideals can be properly represented in the

New Englands beyond the seas. We want to establish in the minds of English Congregationalists a larger ideal of the work of the churches, in which the care of Congregational churches in

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the Colonies will find a natural place. Even if no more funds were available, and no more money contributed than at present, a much greater effect might be produced, and better foundations laid for the future, by a method of organisation which would accustom those who attended the Council to hear reports from Canada and New Zealand and Australia, in the same way as reports from Devonshire and Cumberland and Norfolk. It would mean that the Council was gradually educating a race of Congregational statesmen who might be trusted to develop the work at home and abroad in days to come.

With regard to the three great interests—Home, Foreign, and Colonial Missions—the danger of our present system is that there is no real opportunity of discussing the general policy and claims of the societies entrusted with these departments of our work, except in the presence of those already deeply interested and convinced of the value of the work done. What is wanted is not so much an annual, as a constant and repeated, presentation of the interests and policy and claims of these societies, before those who are interested representatives of our churches, but who may not be specially interested in the work of any one society.

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The Ministry: Admission.

5. It would be the duty of a National Congregational Council to receive, examine, and register the

credentials and qualifications of all ministers desiring recognition as pastors of Congregational churches; to recognise in a solemn united gathering all who have become ministers during the previous twelve months; to specify from time to time the qualifications which must be complied with, before admission to the various privileges and funds intended for the use of Congregational ministers; to conduct or supervise County Union examinations for applicants to the ministry wherever desired.

The Colleges.

6. It would be the duty of a National Congregational Council to secure the maximum of possible co-operation between the colleges where Congregational ministers are educated; to introduce, if possible, some classification of the colleges with a view to making them supply the actual requirements of the churches from time to time, and to avoid unnecessary expense wherever possible. The Council should be represented on all College committees, in order to give voice to the interests of the churches as a whole outside the immediate circle of subscribing churches.

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Sustentation.

7. It would be the duty of a National Congregational Council to secure to every accredited minister of a Congregational church in full denominational fellowship, such a minimum stipend as from time to time may be regarded as a decent maintenance, and within the reach of the churches. It would be necessary to inquire at some length into the most efficient way of

securing this result; and if, as is almost certain to be the case, it be found that a Sustentation Scheme on the equal dividend plan, and adapted to Congregational requirements, is the best way of dealing with this matter, it would then be the duty of the Council to undertake the general management of such a scheme.

Superannuation.

8. The National Congregational Council would be required to undertake the general oversight of the existing funds for making provision for aged, or worn out, or disabled ministers, and for the widows and orphans of ministers deceased. It would undertake the general management of any Superannuation Fund which may be established; and it would be part of its duty to press home on the churches their obligations with regard to that fund. It might do invaluable service to the denomination by the

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concentration of these various funds at one head-quarters. It ought to be possible with the funds at the disposal of the denomination to put the last years of aged and infirm ministers out of the reach of actual want.

Removals.

9. The Council might do something to establish an efficient intermediary between churches seeking pastors and pastors seeking churches, or desiring removal within the denomination. It might call the attention of the churches to the need of appointing a moderator during an interval between two pastorates in a church, and, if requested, advise in the choice. The duty of the moderator would be to preside at all meetings

dealing with the hearing of candidates and the settlement of a new pastor. It would naturally take cognizance of any other requests for counsel or assistance from churches in matters in which the honour and welfare of churches or ministers might be concerned. Such requests should be authenticated by the local Union or association to which the Church belongs, in order to avoid trifling or factious appeals.

Education.

10. It would be the duty of the Council to give all necessary support to the schools established for the sons and daughters of Congregational

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families; it would be represented on the governing committees of these schools; and it might do something in the direction of classifying them, and giving them a national and educational, as well as a local consequence. It would take cognizance of the interests of boys and girls in the great public schools of England. It might be possible in the course of time to arrange in some of those schools that a Free Church housemaster should receive into his house the sons of Free Church parents. This would be a great service both to the schools, in broadening their interests and connections, and to the Free Churches, if it gradually extended their influence in the schools and restored to their sons a fair share of the inheritance of the great traditions and endowments of our public schools.

The work of the Young People's Union has shown that there is a great deal more to be done amongst the young people of our churches than is at present attempted. This is a special work in itself, and requires the continued attention of

those who are interested in it; but it ought not to be necessary to form another Society separate from the Committee of the Union. In the National Council, work amongst the young people of our Churches, educational, organising,

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and specifically religious, would find its natural place.

Constitution.

No attempt is here made to define the constitution of a National Council, for this is obviously one of the matters which can only be settled by compromise and discussion; but no constitution would be satisfactory which leaves in existence the present anomalous gap between the County organisation of the Churches and the National organisation. That gap is a standing illustration of the haphazard methods in which our organisations have grown, and it would be impossible to explain or account for it except by supposing that it came into existence without deliberate intention.

The other requirement which should be insisted upon is that the Council shall not be too large. If it exceeds six hundred in number it becomes quite useless for deliberative and executive purposes, and it would probably be more useful if its numbers were limited to four hundred.

The representation would have to be proportionate either to the number of churches or the number of members in the churches; and the double constituency might be recognised by having members nominated by the churches but elected by the County Unions.

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The Congregational Union.

The discussion of the relation between a National Council and existing Congregational Union affords room for a good deal of difference of opinion. The lines on which it should be determined are indicated by the past history of the Union. It has afforded a platform for speakers who have done a great to deal to educate opinion in our churches. Whatever sentiments of union now exist, whatever corporate consciousness the churches now have, is due very largely to the work of the Congregational Union of England and Wales. It has formed an admirable social and fraternal centre, where College friendships have been renewed, pastoral problems discussed, matters of faith debated, opinions on questions of interest to pastors and churches formed; and, perhaps, most important of all, it has brought remote and isolated country churches, through their representatives, into close touch with the leaders of the denomination, and the historic churches where meetings have gathered. It has given an opportunity to those who are interested in the progress of Congregational societies to lay their policies and programmes before members of our churches, and to stimulate some general interest in their work.

But it is hardly possible to speak too strongly

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of the incompetence of the Union in dealing with matters of administration. It is a singular comment on its history to look at the subjects brought before it periodically in papers received with acclamation, and solemnly printed in the *Year-Books* of the Union. For instance, we find

papers on "Deferred Annuities" in 1846; on the "Adequate Support of the Ministry," and an "Appeal on behalf of the Ministry," in 1849; "Inadequacy of Pastoral Incomes" in 1853; "Extending Congregational Worship in Large Towns" in 1855; a "Sustentation Fund for Ministers" in 1857; "Supplementary Fund for the Support of the Ministry" in 1858; "Improvement of Ministerial Incomes" in 1868; "Congregational Reform" in 1868; "A Congregational Sustentation Fund" in 1870; "Congregationalism in Rural Districts" in 1871; "Dormant Power in our Churches" in 1871; "Missionary Work of Congregational Churches" in 1871; "Interdependence of Independent Churches" in 1874; "Organised Congregationalism" in 1877. These are a few illustrations amongst many which indicate how certain questions have come up again and again on the Union platform. Probably the same things have been said, and there have been the same reasons for saying them, on each occasion. It would perhaps be too harsh a

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judgment to say that the total result was the "applause" which ended the paper, but it is not too much to say that a National Council with some executive ability in it, and some powers of administration entrusted to it, would have dealt with these questions efficiently and conclusively long ago.

The history of the Union then points to a clear distinction of functions. The meetings of the National Council should be for administrative purposes, and speaking in those meetings should only be permitted so far as it contributes to the despatch of business. The exact relations of the Council to the meetings of the Union, as they have been in the past, will have to be worked out carefully, and only determined upon after

prolonged discussion. There is still a place for meetings of the more popular character, when representatives of churches from all over the country may have an opportunity of hearing those orators, of whom the supply has fortunately never been stinted in our denomination. It is possible that these popular addresses, which are really important in the formation of public opinion as well as in the formation of reputations, may in the course of time be directed to illustrate and illuminate the decisions of the National Congregational Council. It would, at least, be wise for

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the Council, in order to prevent the rise of two opposed bodies of sentiment, to take into its own hands, through a committee, the work which is at present done by the committee of the Congregational Union in arranging for the meetings in May and October.

It will be a matter for the churches to consider when the Council is formed, whether we might not with advantage have the popular meetings once a year instead of twice. In that case, the Council would probably meet in October in a provincial town; and the May meetings would still continue to be what they have been for so long, a welcome opportunity after the winter's work for a visit to London, at a time when it is filled with men and women interested in Christian work from all over the world.

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THE AIM OF A CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.[1]

IT should be made clear that Congregationalism is not a special nostrum with which we expect to cure all the evils of humanity; it is not the "ism" we emphasise. What we claim for it is not that

it has the merits of an "ism" at all, but that it gives freest and fullest play to the permanent *redemptive* and *constructive* forces of the Christian faith; that it emphasises only the essential points in the Christian life, but does emphasise them; that it gives free play to the Christian individuality, yet is impracticable without a vigorous corporate life; that its churches are an ideal training-ground for the earthly and the heavenly citizenship; and that it compels us to keep in intimate and vital touch with Christ, the Head of the Church, because where He is absent, and the virtues and graces of the Christian life are not practised, a Congregational church is certain to

[1] Part of an address by the Editor from the Chair of the Staffs. Congregational Union, at Hanley, in March 1900.

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dwindle and disintegrate. We believe that we have not sacrificed freedom to *grow* to a monotonous propriety, nor freedom to *develop* to a fictitious uniformity. Yet we believe it is impossible for our churches to grow *away from* Christ, because He is the sole efficient cause of their being, the main content of their gospel, and the final cause for which they live. He is their bond of union and principle of order. When He is not in their midst, they must die.

How shall we define in positive terms the aim of a Congregational church?

The aims which Christian Churches have proposed to themselves may be roughly classed under three heads:—

1. For at least ten centuries of Christian history it was said that the aim of the Church is the extension of the Church; meaning by that, that it exists to spread a particular religious organisation for conducting specific religious ceremonies over the world, on the ground that that particular

organisation, by its very existence and operations, conveys spiritual benefits. It was a sufficient end to maintain an organisation for the performance of religious ceremonies. This has been specially exemplified by Roman Catholic history.

2. The aim of the Christian Church is said to be the salvation of the individual; it exists to give

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him a saving faith, or a saving experience. This is chiefly characteristic of the churches which date their origin from the Protestant Reformation.

3. In our own time another distinctive view has been entertained—that the aim of the Christian Church is to create a Christian community or a Christian nation. This is, specially in our own land, identified with the Broad Church school, and in Germany with the name of Albrecht Ritschl, in whom, for the first time, the Broad Church views and instincts have attained articulate theological expression.

One of the advantages of standing at the end of a long period of development is that we can see where great ideals have gone astray. The broad pathways of history are strewn with the wrecks of magnificent ideals which have lost their way. Sometimes they have been wrecked owing to no fault in themselves, but because they have been carried by some cross current out of their true course; like some magnificent ocean steamer, equipped and fitted to encounter all winds and waves, yet lost upon some hidden reef because a guiding hand had missed its true direction. Sometimes it is possible for us to separate the ideal from the error that wrecked it. One of the great tasks set to us by the coming century is undoubtedly the salvage of the ideals of earlier centuries which

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have been wrecked through no unsoundness of their own. The twentieth century should be a century of *fulfilment,* bringing the achievement of purposes which earlier generations saw afar, but had not opportunity to reach. We may gather a clue from every great effort to obey a command of Christ or to extend His Kingdom.

Consider briefly, then, these three definitions of the aim of a church:—(1) The extension of an official Church; (2) the salvation of the individual; (3) the establishment of the Kingdom of God or the creation of the Christian State.

I.

Proselytising Churches.

The Roman Church believed that outside the Church there was no salvation. The presence of priests, the observance of the sacraments, the *opera operata* were necessary for the salvation of the people; therefore it was a duty to spread the Church by all and by any means. Charlemagne converted nations at the point of the sword. Alfred converted a Danish king by treaty. It was legitimate to spread the Church by sword, by fire, by falsehood. The end justified the means, and no means were so mean as not to be ennobled

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by the end. The Roman Church succeeded in its aim. It was spread over the known world, but it was spread very thin. A veneer of religion was overlaid on the top of heathenism, and the result styled the orthodox Christian religion. Instead of the world becoming a vast church, as the prosely-tiser hoped, the Church became the world under another name. Her priests married, but dared not

name their wives. They fought, but might not call themselves soldiers. They gave themselves to art, building, literature, and politics, but feared to become frankly artists, men of letters, or politicians. In England the family settlement became the parish, and the parish became the Church. The priest was a parish official, owing his position and influence more to his local connection than to anything else, and in decisive cases showing himself more the minister of the people than the minister of Christ. The Church which began by saying, "Outside the Church is no salvation," ended by compelling men to think that inside the Church no one was saved.[1]

That mournful chapter of Christian history has left a permanent distrust of the view that there is any permanent gain secured by spreading world-

[1] The aim of all work of this type—and there is still a good deal—has been epigrammatically described as an endeavour "to fill the world with religion, and to empty religion of vital godliness."

wide an organisation for performing religious ceremonies. It has become a permanent warning against all methods of extending Christianity which can be classed as proselytism and not as conversion. It has left a permanent dread of the effect of putting power in the hands of Churches other than the power which comes of having the mind of Christ, and training men and women to understand and love that mind.

II.

Religious Individualism.

The aim of the Protestant Evangelical Churches was the salvation of the individual. The Reformers saw clearly enough that the emphasis on the supremacy of the Church in

Romanism had made the system false to its Founder. In remedying the blunder they went to the other extreme. The Church, they said, exists for the sake of the individual. Man is saved by faith. The duty of the Church is so to proclaim the faith that saves, that the scheme of salvation may be fully and continually at work, Secure this, they said, by creed, by law, by the full power of the State, if need be. This raised the questions, "What is the faith that saves?

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How state it so that it will describe and include the experience of every saved individual?" That question embarked the Protestant theologians on an enquiry so intricate and elaborate that their work became known, and not unjustly, as a second scholasticism.

Its aim was a noble one—the endeavour to get clear vision of the ways and works of God in saving men, to think truly and worthily of Him, to find out what it was fitting and right for the Ruler of a Universe to do in dealing with the men He would save. But the effect was very different from the aim. It changed the emphasis in religion, and in religion emphasis makes all the difference between true and false. It resulted in the endeavour to make—

"A storm-proof creed
To fold the flock in at their need."

And the creed was in itself an intellectual masterpiece, requiring a masterly intellect to understand it. It was not a natural fold of rocks and woods and dells, but the cast-iron production of rigidly logical brains. This creed-religion *failed to keep in the forefront of the Church's life the Supreme Person who can alone teach men to think truly of God.* It forgot that Christ is the author and

creator of our faith, and that where *He is not at work* no intellectual exposition of a creed can be

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convincing. It built a cactus hedge round the Church, instead of a fire inside it to warm into life all comers.

The result in England was that the Protestant Communions (we must take our share of the responsibility) saw vast industrial populations grow up outside the churches. Because the people could not come up to them they could do little for the people. They could only proclaim their faith in louder and more anxious tones, while they lamented that these people, which know not the new law of faith, should be accursed.

In Scotland, where the shelter of the storm-proof creed was more fully perfected than in England, some of the choicest of the sheep refused to be "folded" altogether. It is striking to mark how for two hundred years its strongest minds have been found either outside the fold, or doing their best to widen it, or break through it, or pierce holes in it—such as Hume, Burns, Scott, Carlyle, Irving, Erskine, Macdonald. It is to this reaction against a creed-religion, in part at least, that Congregational churches in Scotland owe their survival. The churches which began with the determination to consider the individual, end by sacrificing him to the maintenance of their creed.

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III.

The Broad Church.

To the relief of the distressed individual who wanted a religion, but could not get as far as a storm-

proof creed, came the Broad Church. This is the one contribution to the conception of a church which we owe to the Anglican Communion; but for this, one-half of Anglicanism would have to be classed with Roman Catholicism, the other half with the Evangelical Protestant churches of which we have spoken. In spite of an occasional priggish note, the best exponent of the ideas of the Broad Church in England is Thomas Arnold. In modern Germany, through the teaching of Ritschl, it is to-day the dominant conception of the Church.

According to this view the aim of the Church is not found in the Church itself, nor in the individual, but in the community in which it exists. It exists to produce a God-governed community; or, as Arnold would say, a Christian State. It is necessary, says Ritschl, for believers to meet together in worship that they may get to know one another and be exercised in love. It is necessary for them to have the preaching and exposition of Divine truth in order that they may know the mind

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and will of God, and be in communion with Him. But the aim of all this is found outside the Church. It is that the people so gathered and taught may "learn to act in mutual love, and so produce a community of moral dispositions and moral goods which, regardless of sex, calling, and nationality, shall extend to the limits of the human race." Such a community would satisfy Ritschl's conception of the Kingdom of God.

Dr. Arnold's idea was, at root, the same. The purpose for which the Christian Church existed was to root out moral evil from the life of the community. The ideal was to be a worshipping nation and a Christian State. He would recognise no goal short of the complete identification in *aim* of Church and State. They were both to exist

for the highest welfare of the people who made up both. He would have State officers perform religious functions, and Church officers perform State functions, so that every citizen might feel that the State in which he lived was meant to be a Kingdom of God.

Arnold's ideas can be riddled with criticism from the standpoint of the New Testament, of history, of theology, and of logic. But it is more important for us to remember that this conception of a Church existing for the community, contains an important element of vital

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Christian truth. It is an attempt to give solid expression to the Christian ideal of a Kingdom of God. We may think the expression inadequate, we may believe that the ideal is to be achieved in quite a different way, but it is better to try and fail than not to try at all, and the effort has at least pointed out a path in which others must follow. If those who follow have to make stepping-stones of fallen comrades, they will do it at least reverently and with gratitude to the pioneers.

IV.

Progressive Ends.

Where shall we rank ourselves? How shall we state our aim? We are Protestants: do our Churches exist to make individual Christians? We are Churchmen: do our Churches exist to establish and extend Churches? We are descendants of men who fought and died to give political expression to their religion: shall we say that the Christian individual and the Christian Church exist wholly for the sake of creating a Christian State? Are these aims mutually exclusive or mutually complementary?

The reply which is made by the history and traditions of our Churches is, that *each of these is to*

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be regarded as an end in itself, but that each end when achieved, and only when achieved, becomes the means to a further end. The production of a seed is in itself an end in nature, and until it is produced and perfected nature can do nothing with it. But when the seed is perfected and planted, it soon becomes evident that it carries in its heart the promise of something else. When the seed has fulfilled its promise, you have the flower. And again Nature has achieved one of her ends, and she gives us pause to admire her work. But no sooner is the flower perfected than a new development is found afoot, and it is seen that the flower exists for the sake of a *fruit,* which is in itself an end, yet carries in its heart the promise of new births. God's methods in religion and in nature interpret one another. He aims first at the creation of the religious man—the Christian individual: and until He has got him, all further growth is stayed. When the individual is created responsive to the Divine will, growth begins and issues in a church, When the Church has developed all its functions and is doing its perfect work, but not till then, we shall have the Christian State, the God-ruled community, made up of men in whom the lordship of self has been replaced by the lordship of Christ. The aims are not merely mutually complementary; they are mutually necessary: you cannot get any

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one without making it certain that the others will follow sooner or later.

But why, we may ask, is this perfect order of development seen in nature and delayed in the realm of Spirit? Why has the Christian faith been eighteen hundred years at work without

yet producing a Christian State? We have been frequently assured of late that God is England's God. The question which gives anxiety is whether England is God's England?

We must own that the Churches are partly responsible for the measure of failure that has attended their work—partly for want of seeing and defining their aims, and partly for want of working straight and steadfastly towards them. Our triple aim and the relations of each part to the rest must be kept steadily before us.

V.

The Changed Personality the Seed of all Growth in Religion.

The Protestant principle is right when it says the individual is the first end which religion has in view. It must be so He is precious in the sight of God, even to the last and least. God loves him for himself. There is rejoicing in heaven over

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each individual man or woman saved. Christ came and lived and died that He might bring many sons to glory. Creation and redemption both have for their aim that God may have many responsive sons to share His eternal blessedness.

But surely the leaders of Protestantism were wrong when they made the creed of the individual the all-important thing. The supreme religious problem does not centre round a creed. It is more fundamental than an intellectual problem, though a creed is involved in it. It is concerned not with the belief, but with the believer.

Nor does it mend matters to say that the Christian Gospel concerns itself only or chiefly with conduct. We cannot say, "Conduct, not creed," for the two are intimately related when

they have sufficient *personal* existence to have relations at all. Conduct is an outcome of creed, and creed is a crystallised precipitate of act and thought.

It is a more fundamental problem with which religion deals. *The* religious problem is to create a manhood fully responsive to the Divine Fatherhood. In the forefront of Christianity stands a Supreme Person. The power which He claims, and which His disciples are to claim for Him, is the power to create like-minded persons. We see the Supreme Person to be a Son of Man, yet Son

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of God, suffering, glorious, sacrificial, surrendering self, conquering the world, glorifying God, making possible for man reconciliation with God, and leading men into actual enjoyment of that reconciliation. Most wonderful of all, we find that this Person is able to communicate to others His personality; that is, to change all their relations to man and to God into something like His own, to make men like Himself—son-like in their relations to God, and God-like in their relations to men. The miracle of the changed personality, the transubstantiated character, is the abiding miracle which keeps Christianity alive.

This miracle of the changed personality belongs to the most universal sphere of Christian experience; it is the most unique thing in the Christian religion. It is called by many names—conversion, regeneration, justification, sanctification. We may think of it with Christ as the entry of men into a new life, or with Paul as the coming of a new life into men. The fact intended is the same in each case. It is that fundamental change which begins when the root of a new personality is sown in men by touch with the historic and eternal Christ.

When we turn to Christ Himself we find this to have been always a main burden of His teaching: "I speak thus that you may be sons to your

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Father." "Doth not your Father know your need, and care for the sparrow, and clothe the grass, and seek His lost sons?" How much of His teaching we include when we say, "Steep your life in the Divine Fatherhood until the winds play about you with whisperings from Him, and the stars look down on you, and the flowers look up at you with His eyes. Steep your life in the Divine Fatherhood till joy and sorrow speak only of Him, and the circumstances of your life can all be transmuted into means of spiritual discipline and development; till, in the security of His eye, the favours of men cannot allure you, nor the displeasure of men disturb you!"

When we turn to St. Paul we find that his Gospel is not different, but only the Gospel of the Fatherhood made more passionately forceful by the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, and phrased to suit the necessity of making it penetrate the joints of Pharisaic armour. The surrender and death of Christ avail for the breaking down of the barrier between God and man, which sin creates, and is. The redeeming love of God comes in to restore men to the lost sonship. Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth His Spirit into your hearts whereby ye cry, "Abba, Father!"

What Paul means by the "Christ in us," we know in Christian experience to be the birth in a

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man of the life that is manifestly the life of the Son of God. When a man, under the preaching of the Gospel, awakens in awestricken wonder to find himself a beloved and pardoned child of God, with a sense of infinite debt to Christ, the mind

which was in Christ Jesus is renewed in him. The surrender of self to God, the confidence in the love of the Father, the habitual dependence on the Father's giving, the clear vision of the laws which are laws of happiness because of holiness, the desires of a new manhood, and the conduct of a new man, are all there in some rudimentary form, which yet has promise of the coming growth into the stature of the perfect man.

Here, then, in *this changed personality,* is the first end which religion and church find set before them. This they must expect, look for, work for. They cannot create it. They can prepare for it, wait for it, cultivate it, and recognise that nothing can be *effectually* done except where the changed personality is present. You cannot build either the perfect church or the perfect community unless you have men at work in whom the springs of thought, and act, and feeling are found in a conscious relation to God, and in love to men; in whom sacrifice, and humility, and patient love have gradually extinguished the fires of egotism; and in whom the anarchy of disordered desires has

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been replaced by the clear perception of the laws of the Divine Kingdom.

VI.

A Christian Fellowship.

Wherever you have the changed personality—the new life born in the individual—there will soon be a Church. The order of events historically is here indisputable. It is the Christian who makes the Church, not the Church which makes the Christian. The man who has come out of the anarchy of self-love, into the order of the Divine life, is sure to desire the ordered life of a community

of fellow-Christians. It is a social life which is born in him, and it will be a church of a certain type which he wants.

One who is half a Christian may be satisfied with a society that is half a church and half a political organisation or State department. But the man who owns a debt of infinite obligation to Christ for the new life that is in him, will feel that to attain to the fullest measure of the life of Christ in man must be the aim of His Church. It must own no other lordship and no other aim. Where Christ leads, it must go. In reverent worship, in the priesthood of prayer for all mankind, in ministries of love, in service of sacrifice and

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humility, in the helpfulness of brotherly burden-bearing it must seek to work out the life of Christ in man. And for this it must maintain and sustain all needful stimulus and mutual encouragement.

The new life which is born of the Spirit is a social life, and must have a sphere for its exercise. A church in this sense is as necessary for the heavenly born as a nursery and school are for the earthly born. It is true that you can bring up a street arab without either, and there are spiritual arabs who seem to maintain a nomadic life without a church. But it has never been shown that you can make arabs of either kind of any permanent use to the world without bringing them within the sphere of an organised society, and inducing them to submit to its mutual discipline and to take a share in its co-operation.

And here let me make an acknowledgment of the great debt which all members of Free churches owe to Dr. Hort, the late Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, for his admirable account of the aim and origin of the societies to which the title "Christian Church" was first applied—the debt also of the Congregational churches for the vindi-

cation of Congregational history and polity which that book supplies. Let me recall the points Dr. Hort establishes with the care and ability of exact scholarship:—

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(*a*) He establishes that it wae within the intention of our Lord to found societies of disciples who should be gathered in His Spirit; to learn His ways; to do His work; to keep in touch with His aims; to spread the good news of His life and work.

(*b*) That after Pentecost such societies *grew*. They were not formally instituted by apostolic authority. They grew where men had heard the story of the Cross, and were drawn together by their common belief in Christ.

(*c*) That the relations between church and church, and between apostle and believer, were not those of authority and submission, but of moral suasion, resting on a common obedience to an authority over mind and conscience exercised by, and seated in, the invisible personality of the Lord of the Church.

(*d*) That in these churches the individual is not lost in the society. It is recognised that the society is there for perfecting the full Christian personality in its members.

(*e*) Nor is the society sacrificed to the caprice or opinionatedness of individuals. Each member is expected to accept the authority of the spirit which rules the body as a whole.

(*f*) Dr. Hort makes it clear that there are two uses of the word Church authorised by the New

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Testament: it is used for the local congregation or assembly and for the whole body of believers in Christ. Two things are clearly excluded by the New Testament—(1) any use of the word which

makes the Church equivalent to the "clergy"; (2) any use of the word which makes political or geographical boundaries natural boundaries for a spiritual society.

As soon as the aim and origin of the Christian Church is seen, it becomes clear that the maintenance of a church, *as a necessary complement of the Christian life,* is rightly made an end in itself, The Church cannot go before the Christian individual. Its ceremonies are meaningless as *opera operata.* But wherever the Christian individual is found in twos and threes the Church becomes a necessity of his life. To maintain it for the sake of its members is an end in itself. We are members of one another when we are members of Christ. The virtues and the strength of others are needed in our characters if we are to grow into the stature of the perfect man. Fulness of life, vigour of faith, completeness of view, the enlargement of sympathy, the discipline of character, the understanding of the exceeding breadth of the Divine commandment, are all necessary to the development of the Christian life, and these can only be perfectly obtained by sharing in the life of

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a Christian community. The Christian personality is one which only reaches its full strength in a community life. If we can trust the signs of the times, the next great religious revival will be a revival—or a rediscovery—of something which has been almost lost since the first centuries of our era, —a rediscovery of the beauty and power and essential dignity of *church life,* with its wonderful possibilities of mutual service in the life of the Spirit.

VII.

A Christian State.

The Church is no sooner seen in its perfected life than it becomes evident that it carries within itself the promise and hope of a further end.

Why these changed men? Why this care to develop and discipline the Christian character? The Church itself is not a political institution, but the men who form it are themselves units in the State; they are members of a political community, elements in a social organisation outside the Church. It is certain that if the changed life has really come, and has been developed in them, they will carry over into the political and civic sphere its ideals, the visions of a Divine order, the patient

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endurance, the power of wedding a great ideal to small duties, the habit of building for eternity rather than time, the principles of life which they have learned in their Church. The whole strength of a system which is patient enough to begin with the individual is that the individual, once formed according to a "new type," is changed once for all, and in every part of his mind and character, and must modify all his relationships accordingly.

Shall we say, then, that the Church exists to make a Christian State, or in order to establish a Kingdom of God? By all means, yes! But let there be no doubt as to the quickest way of doing it. There can be no short cuts to the Kingdom of God. The Church will do its work for the State and the Kingdom of God best when it is fulfilling its work most completely in fostering and shaping, stimulating, enlarging, and enlightening the Christian personality, and penetrating men

with the Christian spirit, and the highest Christian ideals.

If we are to have a Christian government, it will be when the men in it are Christian men, avowedly accepting office in loyal service to mankind for Christ's sake. The Kingdom of God is the perfect ideal of human society. It is the Divine order wrought into the texture of human relations. No anarchy, no waste of life, no "rubbish cast to the

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void," no criminal poverty, and no criminal wealth, are in it. Beauty and order and dignity, truth and righteousness and love, are in every relation. It is the perfect individualism, and the perfect socialism; the individual living with consecrated strength for the society; the society caring with the wisdom that cometh from above for the individual.

It requires no profound political wisdom to see that the working of such a society requires God-ruled men for its basis; and not only men who mean to be ruled by God (well-meaning enthusiasts), but also men trained and cultured by long experience in the discipline of community life: as patient and considerate and steadfast as they are devoted and zealous: as sympathetic and courageous, and self-forgetful and enlightened, as they are strenuous and determined.

The glory and difficulty of the ideal is the reason for its long delay in fulfilment. But it is also our encouragement to work on. For every church which is planting in the hearts of men the life of Christ, or bringing the heart of Christ into the life of men—every church which is maintaining its own true ideals of the Christian life, and giving its members glimpses of the Spiritual Kingdom,—is doing something towards the end. A national church is not a church that is made by a nation, but a church which helps to make a nation.

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And every church is a national church which is making better citizens, and better men.

VIII.

The call of the twentieth century to our Churches is now in our ears. It is not materially different from the call of other centuries, but it asks us to be swift and prompt in hearing it, inasmuch as we are more free and able to obey.

The aim of our Churches must be, as ever, to bring men to face Christ, and to bring the whole force of the personality of Christ to bear on men, so that the new manhood, the changed personality, is created. Our first aim is conversion, and that not of the fitful and emotional order, but permanent conversion, the turning of mind and will, heart and soul, Godwards.

The second aim of a Christian Church is to perfect and extend the Christian life in converted men and women. It is to encourage, to discipline, to sustain, to enlighten, to enlarge that life; to nourish and bring to maturity the seeds of Christian character; to impress the spirit of Christ on every member and on every activity; to eradicate the egotism of the individual, and the selfishness of the society; to teach the arts and practice

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of life in a brotherhood, and to keep alive the flame of devotion. It is to extend the Church by establishing churches of this order and spirit. This is the intensive growth of the Kingdom of God within a nation.

But the Church is also for the extensive growth of the Kingdom. It is to be missionary in the conventional and every other sense. It is to care supremely for the reign of light, truth, righteousness, charity, peace in politics and civic life. It is

to make it clear that for the Christian State all hope lies in work done not in rivalry but in co-operation, not in pride but in surrender, not in passion but in charity. It is to evangelise the heathen peoples. Its work will be perfected in the belief that it is equally the glory of God to give peace on earth, and the first and final hope of peace among men to live to glorify God.

In presence of such a vision of duty we may appeal to ourselves to see the greatness of the calling wherewith we are called. In its presence we are humbled and exalted: humbled, for who is sufficient for these things? We are inefficient where we ought to be strong because we have not asked for power: we ask and receive not because we ask amiss. But we are also exalted: for is not this a noble calling? Is any greater? Is it not more than enough to satisfy every

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honourable ambition that God has given to men? It is a great work to which God has called His Churches, and is there any ideal of a Church which is better fitted for the work to be done than the ideal—free, spiritual, orderly, strenuous —which we have received from our fathers?

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SUSTENTATION.

PROS AND CONS.

Con.—A Sustentation Scheme is consistent with Presbyterianism, but inconsistent with Independency, and must interfere with the freedom of the Church to manage its own affairs.

Pro.—A Congregational Sustentation Scheme would leave churches free to enter the scheme, or not, according to the vote of the church meeting. It would thus be presented as the

adoption of a systematic financial method in place of an unsystematic one, for achieving objects which the churches have already at heart. The important part of a Church's freedom is its freedom to follow the leadings of the Spirit of Christ, and it cannot be regarded as seriously threatening that freedom to do well what they now agree in doing badly. On the other hand, it may be regarded as a consequence of our obedience, only gradually made clear by experiment and example elsewhere, that the

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churches should put the support of the preaching ministry of the denomination on the same level of importance as the support of their own minister.

Con.—A Sustentation Fund might be used to support inefficient men.

Pro.—We have to choose between inadequately supporting many efficient men, and supporting some who are inefficient. We shall do less harm to the progress of Christianity by choosing the latter alternative than the former. In every ministerial problem there are two all—important factors, the human and the Divine. The solution is usually to be found not in shifting from one to the other, but in steadily giving full attention to both. When the question of ministerial support is raised, there are always some who say it is not support they need but the Holy Spirit, whereas the truth may be that they need both, and cannot do without either. If we make the position of a Congregational minister a position of responsibility and dignity, increasing care will be exercised every year in admitting men to that position, and there will be a steady tendency to improve the quality of the men who occupy it. The Holy Spirit acts most potently when the best human material is offered to act upon. Against any

disadvantages incurred for the time in undertaking to support the ministry as we find it, must be set

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the important advantage that in the course of a few years it will be possible to maintain men of character and spiritual gifts in new and populous neighbourhoods, where churches are certain to grow around them; and also in village pastorates where the personal worth of a man counts for far more, and where individual influence is far greater, than in suburban churches into which such men at present too often drift.

Con.—The operation of a Sustentation Fund, with its necessary insistence on the qualifications of the men sustained, will limit the freedom of the churches to choose their ministers. In this way exceptional men with great spiritual endowments, but without qualifications of culture and training, will be prevented from entering the ministry. This will mean the creation of a dead-level in our pulpits, and the loss of men of outstanding eminence who have always been the strength and pride of our denomination.

Pro.—Experience has shown that room must be left for men of exceptional endowment, but it has also shown that the normal method of the Spirit of God is to use the best training and equipment which can be given for the ministry. A Congregational Sustentation Scheme should provide for the normal, but leave room for the exceptional, cases. It could do this by making

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provision in the first case for men who enter the ministry in the usual way; but it should also allow any church which had chosen for its minister a man who had not been trained in the usual way to apply for his admission to the Sustentation Scheme after he had served them, say, for a term

of five or six years; and if this application were guaranteed by a County Union, and confirmed by a vote of the Congregational Council after an examination, or other suitable test which should be the same for all counties, it would constitute as good a certificate of fitness for the ministry as a college course, if not, indeed, a better one. Between accepting the pastorate and being admitted to the Sustentation Scheme, such a minister would be recognised as minister of the church, but a probationer as regards denominational privileges; one being a spiritual office, the other merely a matter of organisation.

Con.—Sustentation would lead to creed tests, and so fetter the freedom of the ministry in matters of faith, and the liberty of the pulpit.

Pro.—In matters of creed, sustentation of the ministry as a whole, stands on exactly the same footing as the sustentation of an individual minister by the members of his own congregation. It is the deliberate judgment of our churches that they can depend on the maintenance of a spiritual

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fellowship as a guarantee of fidelity to the essential facts and faith of the Christian religion. In the case of the body as a whole, we should have to act in the same faith, and trust in the same guarantee. As often happens when Christian people agree to trust one another, they are, on the whole, likely to find one another worthy of trust. In such a case what we trust is not merely our brethren, but Christ in our brethren, believing that He will not fail. Those who find themselves out of touch with the spirit of our churches will go out from us, because they are not of us.

Con.—If a church is not able to support its own minister, it is better to let it die. This is the natural law which provides for the survival of the fittest, and conduces to the maintenance

only of the strongest churches, which are the only ones worth preserving.

Pro.—It is true that Congregationalism in the past has cared chiefly for those churches which are able to care for themselves. The result has been that if one compares a *Year-Book* of fifty years ago with a modern one, the names of many of the country churches which appear in the older book have dropped out altogether from the modern one.[1]

[1] A friend in Staffordshire has informed me that he has seen nine Congregational Churches go out of existence in his lifetime for want of guidance and support.

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This is not good for Congregationalism; it is bad for country districts, and it is a gross breach of fellowship towards those who form the members of our struggling churches. There are in many villages families brought up at the Independent Chapel; if the Independent Chapel ceases to be, they do not easily attach themselves elsewhere. In many cases their young people are lost not only to the Christian Church but to Christ. In this respect we have inherited a "cure of souls," which we cannot neglect without a dereliction of duty for which our Master may one day call us to account. If, on the other hand, we can strengthen our hold on the country districts by putting into them men who will "shine as lights in the world, holding forth the Word of Truth," we shall find that the villages are still, as ever, the most fruitful of all soils for the seed of the Gospel. There, character can be moulded without the disturbing excitements of town life. Young men and women will be brought to Christ, and trained in the duties of church life, who will afterwards fill important posts in city churches, and perhaps help to stay an ebbing, or guide a flowing, tide.

We ought to make it possible for more young men of culture and spiritual gifts to take pastorates in country villages, or to go into small

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churches for a time. At present it is difficult for a man to do so without irreparably damaging his chance of future usefulness. It is assumed under the present system of *sauve qui peut* that he has gone to a small church because he could not get a large one. This is simply an assimilation of the Church of Christ to one of the worst features in the world. In the Kingdom of God the rewards go to sacrifice, and not to ambition; and in the Christian Church the laws of the Kingdom ought to have greater weight than the habits of the world.

It is a consideration of which we should not lose sight, that methods of the more Christian kind command the respect of observant and thoughtful eyes. We lose many of those who belong to what are called our best families, because, when they get into a country district or a remote suburb, they discover that Congregationalism is a suburban religion which has no eyes for out-of-the-way corners. If we can put good men into small places, and support them adequately, we shall keep some of the families which are at present lost to us.

It might also be urged that it is a national duty to maintain the Puritan tradition of character and domestic life in the villages of England. There are villages where thirty years ago Non-

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conformity was vigorous enough to erect chapels, conduct schools, and maintain services, where it is hardly possible now to get a congregation of a dozen people. We have got into a vicious circle. We starve the villages, the villages starve their

ministers, the ministers starve the congregations; and so the process of mutual extinction goes on. Evangelical life would not have been at so low an ebb in our villages to-day had we supplied them with better men.

What is required now is a deliberate effort, extended over many years, to reverse the policy into which we have drifted; to supply the best men, men of character and conviction and faith, consecration and education, equipped for preaching a gospel of grace, who can hold their own in every respect beside the resident Anglican clergy, but living as "helpers of the Lord's people, not as lords over them," to use a good phrase of Cromwell's. One fully qualified Free Church minister for every village of 500 souls is not too much to hope for; and by systematic co-operation with other Free Churches this standard might be reached in the course of time.[1] The better men

[1] It seems possible that the Free Churches may be forced into some defensive united action of this kind by the educational policy of the Anglican Church. But if it can be done in defence, why not also from impulse from within?

will make better churches, and the better churches will be better able to contribute to their support. Niggardliness begets niggardliness, generosity is born of generosity.

Whether that attempt can be made depends ultimately on the measure of our faith in the Gospel as it is held in our Puritan and Evangelical tradition. If we believe that the Puritan Gospel has still a national work to do, that it was not born to perish in a smug suburbanism, but to renovate and redeem the national life, we shall say with Cromwell, "This is necessary to be done, and therefore can be done." Short of that conviction, our destiny appears to be to nurse our watchwords until we find that their spiritual

contents have disappeared; we keeping the shell, and someone else having extracted the kernels.

Con.—Even granting that in theory a Sustentation Fund is desirable, it is impracticable in churches brought up with our traditions.

Pro.—On the contrary, we have already in existence the materials of a workable Sustentation Scheme in the Church Aid work of our County Unions. The steps by which such a scheme might be worked out appear to be as follows:—

1. There would have to be an agreement to deal with each county, or group of counties, separately, until it was seen how

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much levelling up of incomes could take place over the country as a whole. In the case of large counties, the unit would naturally be the county; in the case of several counties, when the conditions were much the same, several counties might be grouped.

2. Each county would then be asked to fix a minimum stipend for those within its own borders. Such a minimum might be fixed by agreement, in the first instance, at a few pounds above the actual existing minimum, as it is to-day. As an example, in the case of the county which the writer knows best, the income might be fixed at a minimum of £120. The minimum would probably vary in the different counties from £80 up to £140.

3. All aided churches in the county would pay over the total sum raised for the support of the ministry to the treasurer of the fund each quarter. The treasurer might be either in the county or in London.

4. All aiding churches would pay over to the treasurer the minimum stipend, plus their present contributions to the County Union. If these contributions were lower than a fair proportion of the income of the church, the church might be asked to make up the

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amount. That would mean, say, a sum of £120, plus £40—equal to £160 per annum. This would be reckoned the first charge on the income of the church, and would be paid over, as in the case of the aided churches, quarterly, to the treasurer.

5. The treasurer would have to keep separate accounts for each county or group of counties; but his work would be simple. He would simply divide the total sum received, by the number of ministers, and remit an equal amount to each minister.

6. When churches had grown accustomed to the method, and the relative standard of income in the different counties was known, it would be possible to add supplementary gifts to the sums to be divided in the counties where incomes were lowest, and, in this way, gradually level up the standard throughout the country.

This method has the double advantage of enlisting the county sentiment in its support, and using the existing materials, and, in this way, securing close and interested supervision of the welfare of the smaller churches. It also avoids making too heavy a demand on the salaries of ministers in the aiding churches; the only part of their incomes liable to any reduction under this

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system would be the amount up to the level of the agreed minimum stipend. This would involve some sacrifice, but it is one which ministers really interested in the welfare of the denomination as a whole, and anxious to interpret their profession of brotherhood into a fraternal financial system, would most certainly be willing to make.

This is, however, only one of several possibilities, and is mentioned here merely to show that, supposing the churches are willing to make a venture

of faith, there are elements in our present system which might be taken up into a much more complete and efficient organisation.

The important point in which sustentation contrasts favourably with church aid, as practised at present, is that the latter regards the support of the ministry in poor churches as a charity, and therefore something of a luxury, to be indulged in out of the abundance of the wealthy. Sustentation makes the support of the ministry in the whole fellowship of churches a matter of weekly provision and sacrifice, to be maintained not out of our abundance, but even out of our poverty, for the common good.

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SUPERANNUATION.

PROS AND CONS.

Con.—A fresh Superannuation Fund is not necessary. We have a Pastors' Retiring Fund and a number of other funds, for dealing with aged ministers.

Pro.—As things are, the Retiring Fund is not equal to its obligations. There is often a very awkward gap between retirement from the ministry and the first payment from the Fund, and the formalities connected with admission to the Fund leave room for a good many to escape the advantage it is supposed to offer to all. But, even supposing the Retiring Fund were larger and its method of operations were more elastic, the principle on which it is established is not one which would appeal to all our ministers, nor is it educative for our congregations. It is a charitable fund, and the grounds on which its grants are made are necessarily based upon the pecuniary necessities of the applicants. That is

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not the right basis for a Superannuation Fund at all, and no skill in administration can make it so. A man who has served the churches of the denomination for twenty or thirty or forty years has established a reasonable claim to be regarded as something more than a pensioner on the charity of the denomination. He has probably rendered services of a kind for which money is a very poor equivalent.

The moral basis of a Superannuation Fund is the consideration that while a minister is serving the churches, he is at the same time establishing an equitable right to a peaceful old age, unharassed by the sense that he is a burden to others; to be free from the necessity of appealing to their charity; and not to be required to work when he is no longer fit for it. This is the principle recognised now by most honourable employers; by many companies, banks, and in other businesses employing large staffs, where the method generally adopted is that the employee makes an annual contribution from his salary, and the firm a contribution of corresponding amount, and the sums so contributed accumulate to form a Pension Fund.

Con.—When ministers have reached an age for retirement, if they have been good men and have served the churches well, they are looked after

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by the last congregation which has benefited by their services. This has proved adequate up to the present, and we see no reason to change.

Pro.—Some churches which have accepted the responsibility of retiring their pastor, have found themselves very heavily burdened by this obligation, and even crippled. The fear of having such an obligation devolving upon them sometimes

prevents a church from taking a minister who might serve them well for ten or twelve years. A Superannuation Fund, on the principle of an equal annual contribution from the minister and the churches which he has served through the years of his ministry, might be regarded as a kind of "insurance against risk" on the churches' part, and, as such, should commend itself to business men. It would mean that all the churches would gradually come to be paying a small annual premium, in proportion to the salary they give their minister, to insure their freedom, and the freedom of their successors, from the necessity of maintaining a minister when he is past service.

But it is also to be remembered that there are many cases at present where a series of accidents may cause a minister, when he is getting aged, to lose the sympathy of his congregation to such an extent that, although in his prime he did excellent

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service, his Church may be no longer willing to take any responsibility for him. A minister may give the years of his youth and strength to one or two churches; his people are enthusiastic, his record stainless; he carries the churches through crises of importance with wisdom and judgment; under his preaching and teaching young men and women are turned to God, and "such as are being saved" are added to the Church.

But he grows older; he is not quite so quick in taking to new ideas, and seizing new occasions, and welcoming new faces; younger men come into the neighbourhood who make a difference to his congregation; his voice is not so good as it was, and his hearing is a little dull at deacons' meetings; his eyesight not so quick at recognising even familiar faces. His congregation, many of whom owe to him

under God what they are, begin to wish he would see the propriety of resigning. Perhaps some accident reveals the changed feeling of his people; it takes him by surprise, and he resigns. No other church wants to begin a new era with an old man. He may still have ten or fifteen years to live, which time he might profitably employ in the service of the churches if he had the necessities of life provided for; but he finds himself thrust aside and compelled to stand idle

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in the market-place, not because his Lord did not hire him, but because there is no place for him to work in the vineyard to which he was called. He has probably taken care to provide for his wife by insurance, but not for himself; and now finds himself, after thirty-five or forty years' service, more penniless than when he began his ministry,

Con.—The whole premium will come out of the minister's pocket, and as many can barely live at present, this will amount to a diminution of the necessaries of life.

Pro.—The churches will grow into, if they have not already, a sense of responsibility in this matter, and even if ministers were obliged to pay the whole premium out of their salaries, a Superannuation Scheme of the kind contemplated would be worth adopting, because it would supply one of the very cheapest and most secure methods of providing for old age. But there is no reason why, if our churches are properly instructed in the matter, they should not feel a certain pleasure in taking their share of this responsibility. Independency cannot be pleaded as an excuse for not recognising the first commandment with promise, older than Christianity itself. If our days are to be long in the land, we must not penalise old age, and make the burden of years intolerable. The churches would gradually discover the benefit of having

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help and guidance from superannuated ministers; whose testimony to the happiness and satisfaction of their service would help to maintain the vigour and the attachment to Congregational principles of younger generations. As things are, the presence of aged ministers in some parts of the country is apt to tell in the opposite direction in our churches. Some who suffer make no complaint themselves, but younger men see their suffering, and take warning; they make their own indictment against that aspect of the voluntary system which tends to put ministers on the same level as a popular favourite at the theatre or music hall; to give him a large salary in the day of his popularity, and then to leave him in the lurch when that is over.

In the case of those who are too poor, or whose churches are too poor, to make the annual payment themselves, it should be possible to utilise some of the existing funds, either those raised by the Twentieth Century Movement, or in the possession of older societies, to pay the annual premiums necessary for superannuation.

Con.—If sustentation and superannuation are provided for, it will induce men to enter the ministry from inferior reasons. The ministry should leave room for some exercise of faith and sacrifice.

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Pro.—The present danger in dissenting churches is not that the service of Christ within their borders, but that the service of Christ outside their borders, will be made too attractive. There will always be room for sacrifice and faith in the service of such churches as ours, even when the pressure of pecuniary anxieties is much less than at present. The Congregational ministry to many

involves the sacrifice of all social advantages, all prospect of pecuniary reward. Every year more of our ministers will be educated at the Universities, and the sons of Nonconformists will go there for their education; they will have as friends and competitors in college clubs, examinations, and debates, men who a few years later will be leaders at the Bar, heads of Government offices, Canons, Deans, and Bishops in the Established Church, or rulers of great provinces in the east, west, or south. Such positions offer large opportunities to men who enter public life with the desire to serve in the Kingdom of God, and impress the Christian spirit upon all the relations of life; and it is impossible to disregard the fact that they also offer social influence which can be used in the Master's service, and incomes which enable men to leave behind them families so educated and established, as to offer still greater opportunities for public and Christian service.

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These are the alternative careers with which ministers will be more and more confronted. There are many men who are willing to make the sacrifice of income and social position involved, in order to enter the service of a Free Church of Christ, not for anything that the Church offers, but for the sake of the Church's Lord; and the churches will profit most from such service. A wise man knows that in deciding his calling it is as much to be considered what it will make of him as what he will make of it, and he knows that social and pecuniary disadvantages may yield more than adequate compensation as they force the soul to find companionship in Christ, and feed on the bread of heaven. But we have no right to ask men to accept conditions of service which are so restricted as to means, and insecure as to the

future, as to injure the spiritual life itself, and poison it with regrets and ignominies.

Con.—A Superannuation Scheme must either be equitable or charitable. If it be charitable, it will have all the objectionable characteristics of the existing Retiring Fund. If it be on an equitable basis, and the pension proportioned to payments, it will have the disadvantage that the minister who has had a small income all his life will get a small pension, and the minister who has had a large income all his life will get a large one.

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Pro.—The scheme proposed by the Congregational Union secures for those who take full advantage of it, a pension at sixty-five very nearly equal to half the salary up to the time of being pensioned. This is a fair pension, so that there should be no actual grievance. If the premiums of those whose salaries are less than £150 per annum are paid out of funds invested in the name of the Union, ministers on small incomes will get a very large return for a very small payment.

It is important also to enlist in the support of this fund, large and wealthy churches as well as small and poor ones. If a church gives its minister a thousand a year, and knows that he is spending it wisely and generously in the service of the Master and the Church, there would be no inducement to such a church to subscribe to a superannuation fund if it only secured to its minister a possible grant of £30 or £35. The superannuation allowance must bear some proportion to the amount of income. It is too late at sixty-five to attempt to revise all the inequalities of life—inequalities of endowment, and character, and opportunity, and service; if that is to be done, it must be done earlier. Meanwhile, it is a step well worth taking to secure that no minister is without assistance in providing for

old age; that those who have prosperous and calamitous times in the course of their ministry,

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provide in the times of prosperity for the times of calamity; and that those who give to the churches the service of mental and other powers, which would have secured them large incomes in other spheres, are not obliged to appeal on eleemosynary grounds when old age overtakes them.

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COUNTY UNIONS.

THE County Union is the oldest form of associated Congregationalism. When, during the Commonwealth, an endeavour was made to establish Presbyterianism legally as the National religious organisation, the effort failed, except in London and Lancashire where, for four or five years, the meetings of Classes, as they were called, were held. A varying number of neighbouring parishes united to form the Classis; one minister and two or more elders were the delegates from each parish to a monthly "classical" meeting held at some town of importance. All matters relating to church membership, sacraments, and morals, might come before Classes; and there was an appeal to it from the local Presbyteries, and from it to the provincial Synod.

Over the greater part of England the authority of such meetings was repudiated. The ministers in charge of churches were either Episcopalians on principle, or what we should now call Congregationalists; and they were not prepared to

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hand over what they regarded as the duties and privileges of the local church to any body outside itself. In place of the Classes they fell back on

voluntary associations for fellowship and mutual help "in a charitable way."[1]

Baxter describes the intention of these voluntary associations thus:—"Let the pastors and churches that live within the reach of any communion, as many as is possible, associate and meet for the maintaining of communion of churches by their officers and delegates. And those that differ in such tolerable way as may not hinder their Christian or church communion, and yet are not satisfied to join in any synod with the rest, let them agree upon such terms of communion and Christian correspondence as their principles will admit."[2] Adam Martindale describes such meetings as "For mutuall advice and strengthening each other"; and he explains the difference from the classes thus: "If it be asked how I got satisfaction to act with them now, when I had scrupled some things concerning classicall government at the time of my being at Gorton, I answer, the case was not the same. Here was only a voluntary association of such as were

[1] *Adam Martindale's Diary,* Cheetham Society, p. 112. Quoted by Mackennal.
[2] *Baxter's Works,* 1854. Volume iv. p. 337.

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desirous to advise and assist one another, nor did we look upon ourselves as having any pastorall inspection over one another's congregations; but onely to be helpfull to them in a charitable way; we pretended not to any power to convent any before us, or suppress any minister because dwelling in such a place, within such a verge, and differing from us in practice."[1] Of such associations the County Unions are lineal descendants.

The recognition of the need of association, and the fulfilment of Christian life by fellowship, which appeared thus early as a complement to

the principle of the spiritual autonomy of the individual church in England, has had a long and interesting history for two hundred years in the sister churches of the United States. Its chief development is thus described by Dr. Dexter[2]:—

> "Congregationalism is distinguished from Independency by adding to the principle of the self-completeness, under Christ, of the local church, the further principle that, since all local churches belong to the one family of

[1] About 1653. See Mackennal's *Evolution of Congregationalism,* p. 95.

[2] Dexter's *Congregationalism of the last Three Hundred Years, as seen in its Literature,* p. 523.

> the Lord, they necessarily owe to each other sisterly affection and activity; the normal exercise of which takes the name of the communion of the churches. Ordinarily such communion is manifested by reciprocal recognition, by exchanging members, and by labouring together, with mutual understanding, for the best promotion of the common work which Christ has laid upon His Universal Church on earth.
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> "Extraordinarily it has three functions:—(1) After due warrant appears, of admitting a new candidate to the general fellowship; (2) of sisterly advice to a member of the fraternity asking it in the interest of light, or peace, or both; and (3) of the endeavour, where a sister church has been overtaken in a fault, to restore it in the spirit of meekness—in the sad case of persistence in disorderly walking, ending by formally withdrawing that fellowship which has been forfeited, as a testimony against them.
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> "Inasmuch as neighbouring churches cannot wisely or conveniently assemble in a body for the discharge of these duties of extraordinary fellowship, they meet by

delegation; such a meeting of the delegates of the churches being held to be

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the churches themselves present for consultation and action. These assemblies of the delegates of the churches for purposes of extraordinary fellowship are called Ecclesiastical Councils. As modern Congregationalism was brought to its first full development in New England, such councils have been more frequent here than elsewhere; and it is in the ecclesiastical annals of New England especially that they are to be studied, their methods developed, their value estimated, and the relation which they may wisely hold to the Congregationalism of the future determined. All ecclesiastical councils, as to their design, fall then naturally into these four classes; being convoked in the interest of fellowship,.of light, of peace, or of purity."

The instincts and principles which lead to association and fellowship have been developed less systematically in England than in America,[1] but the fraternal sentiment has not been left without witness in any part of England. The origin of County Unions in the desire for fraternal co-operation, has determined the character of their meetings, and the nature of their functions. Their meetings were primarily for fellowship and mutual encouragement; but the fellowship which begins in

[1] See Appendix on American Councils.

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the spirit, gradually externalises itself in a variety of forms. County funds for the maintenance of aged ministers, for widows and orphans of deceased ministers, for church extension, and for the maintenance of poor churches, have grown out of their fellowship, and are naturally administered at the meetings of County Unions. The very naturalness of their growth and object makes them the

most efficient instruments for any scheme of organisation which is to carry with it the full co-operation of the churches. They are the pivot on which the machinery of organised Congregationalism must turn. At present it is the weakness, both of the County Unions and the Union of England and Wales, that they are too independent of one another. If the work which requires to be done is to be done well, there will have to be a careful and systematic division of labour between the National and the County Unions. The latter must be made influential enough to invite the attendance of the best and most capable men in our churches. The details of the division of labour would, of course, be worked out by discussion and experiment.

Meanwhile, an outline of the constructive work of an active County Union will indicate the kind of work to be done.

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Church Extension.

It should be part of the business of County Unions to keep a close and strategic watch on opportunities for church extension. It is the misfortune of our system that it allows a minister to put every kind of obstacle in the way of church extension in his' own neighbourhood, and even tempts him to do so. To extend at all requires him to make a great effort, which is first an effort of faith, and then an effort of will, and then involves a serious addition to his own duties and financial obligations. He must first convince himself that extension is a duty, then convince his deacons, and then his church; and as his reward he may look forward to decreased congregations and a diminished income in the church of which he is a pastor. This, at least, is the super-

ficial appearance of the case as it presents itself to a minister. If he can overcome all these obstacles, he is likely to discover that there is "that scattereth and yet increaseth," and it is to men who have made this discovery that Congregationalism owes its most honourable and useful extensions. But the superficial difficulties are so many that the initiative ought not to be left entirely to individual churches. If a church undertakes the responsibility of an extension, and is prepared to make a sacrifice of members

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for this purpose, it ought to be possible for the National and County Unions to bear some part of the financial burden, and to that extent make the work easier. If, as our system properly demands, strong churches are made the agents in doing the extension work of the denomination rather than individual officials, this can be better done through the County than the National Union.[1]

A County Union ought to have brought under its notice from time to time the statistics of population, the development of suburbs, and similar facts indicating where extension can be profitably carried out. It ought to be possible for it to relieve the churches which are doing the work of extension from the main part of the financial burden. In some cases, where no single church is near enough or strong enough to bear the responsibility of making a fresh beginning, it should be within the competence of a County Union to take the responsibility of sending a missioner to gather a congregation. In all such cases farsighted administration means, not only

[1] This principle was strictly adhered to in the work of the Huntingdonshire County Union, the constitution of which was drafted by the late Mr. Potto Brown, of honoured memory. All grants for poorer village churches were made through aiding churches;

the pecuniary link carried with it an amount of friendly co-operation which was invaluable to the churches aided.

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the increase of churches and the extension of the Kingdom of God, but also increasing financial prosperity for the Union. The better the administration, the larger will be the funds at disposal.

The Lancashire Congregational Union has set a very important example in regard to church extension by becoming incorporated. This enables the Union to become trustees of any sites or new buildings acquired within the county. This appears to be a small change at first, but it saves a great deal of trouble and expense in the matter of trusteeship; and it has an important effect in freeing the churches from undesirable trustees, and in securing for them the best administration of the powers conferred by the trust.

Trust-Deeds.

County Unions may render another important service to the churches by making provision for a periodical audit and registration of trust-deeds. This is desirable in all cases, but it is specially needed in the case of smaller churches and rural congregations. It frequently happens that, by misadventure or carelessness, and occasionally by deliberate intent, trust-deeds come into wrong hands; in many cases trustees die without appointing successors; in some cases buildings are occupied for many years without a trust-deed at all. It would be hard to find any analogous case where so large an

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amount of invested capital is held with so little legal security, and so few safeguards. This is a matter which requires some business ability and legal knowledge to put right; one or two good men in every county taking the matter up may

render great service to the churches. In some cases they will probably prevent the loss of buildings to the denomination altogether.

Moderators during a Vacancy.

The County Union is the most efficient substitute which we have in England for the American Church Council. Although it will probably be long before our churches will give to the Unions anything like a power of veto on admission to the fellowship of Congregational Churches, such as the American Councils have, it ought not to be impossible to persuade even the most independent churches to admit a moderator who would represent the outside interests of the denomination at the meetings which deal with the appointment of a pastor. In the case of aided churches this principle is already fully admitted. In the County Union best known to the writer, a standing order provides that the visitors appointed by the County Union shall always be members of the Supply Committee in the case of a vacancy; and it cannot be insisted upon too strongly that, in the matter of

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principle, there is no difference here between aided and aiding churches. It is not the possession of money which gives churches the right to do as they like; and the obligations of fellowship exist just as strongly in the case of churches with full coffers, as in the poorer churches. In one sense it is more so. A large and important church which is looked up to for leadership over a wide district, does more harm than a small one if, in the choice of its minister, it disregards the obligations imposed by its position. Wherever the choice is justifiable, it could be justified not only to the selecting church, but also to the body of churches

with which it is thrown into closest union, and which depend upon it for co-operation.

Evangelists.

In the evangelistic work of the churches, County Unions have an important place to fill which has hitherto been only partly recognised. We greatly need a carefully trained and mobile force of evangelists, to be kept chiefly at the disposal of our County Unions and Mission Boards in large towns. At present, the evangelist is too frequently regarded as merely an underpaid minister. This is an absolute misuse of the term. There are men in all ranks of life, happily, who have received the exceptional gift of bringing the spiritual life to birth in the preaching of the Gospel.

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On the large scale they are men like Moody, Gypsy Smith, Campbell Morgan, and John M'Neil; but I have known others whose names were never heard beyond their own immediate neighbourhood, who seldom preached without receiving testimony that their words had been the means of opening the eyes of someone to the existence of a spiritual kingdom. These men are very often unfitted in every respect to be settled ministers; they are sometimes men utterly incapable of organisation, leadership, and attention to business details; but, if they are set free to work in their own way in a vil'age or the neighbourhood of a town, they will resuscitate a church and bring new life to its members.

Or the evangelist may be a man of another type—wise and skilful in personal dealing with men and women; capable of organising; vigorous and magnetic in character; a real power on the platform or in the open air, but, for some reason or another, inefficient in the pulpit. Men

of this kind, I understand, are often appointed as superintendents for home mission work in the new districts of the Western States of America. They organise Sunday schools, and keep them under their own oversight until out of them a church can be formed. They stand in the relation of primitive bishops to a circle of local preachers, and in this

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way prepare the ground for the growth of churches in succeeding years.

Such a body as a County Union, with some continuity of administration, would find out the quality of such men, and would know how to supplement one by the other. It is neither consistent with the system of nature, nor of grace, to suppose that the best can be made of every man by keeping him at work amongst one set of people for an indefinite number of years. The greater the elasticity of the system, the larger room there will be for the operations of the Spirit which "bloweth where it listeth."

Removals. If anything is to be done in the direction of assisting removals where ministers are looking for churches, and churches for ministers, the County Unions will have to be called into counsel. They know a great deal more about the men and the churches than can be recorded in the minute books of a London committee; and it ought to be possible to educate them, by trusting them, into responsible agents of the denomination and the churches.

It has been suggested that, in order to meet the needs of those churches and ministers who require frequent changes, there might be some definite period at which the relationship between

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the church and minister either terminated naturally or was renewed. In a Congregational church in Huntingdonshire this method was customary; the trust-deed embodies the provision that, six months before the end of every three years from the time of settlement, the church's call to the minister must be renewed. If it is not, the ministry terminates at the end of the three years' term. In this case, the arrangement worked well. Some modification of this with a period of five or seven years, and an understanding between County Unions all over the country that all these defined periods should come to an end, say, at midsummer, would enable the County Unions to establish something like an exchange system. Ministers would be looking for churches and churches for ministers at the same time, and, by correspondence between the Unions, matters might be arranged. This may perhaps look a startling innovation to those who know only the external state of our present church life. If they knew how often it falls to a single minister, or the professor of a college, or the secretary of a denominational society, to discharge the functions which are here assigned to the County Union, it would be admitted that the more public method would be a change for the better. Such arrangements could not, of course, in any

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way affect those ministries which, by a natural fitness of things, seem destined to be life-long. They would still remain for the joy and profit of both minister and church participating in them, and the pride of the denomination which provides for them.

When the National Council has made up its mind as to the qualifications required for admission

to the fellowship of Congregational churches, the delicate work of recognising that there may be ministers of Congregational churches who are not yet qualified for admission to the fellowship of the denomination will have to be entrusted to County Unions; and there is no body through which a friendly authority could be more fitly exercised. It would be perfectly possible for men who are in fraternal relations, and otherwise giving assurance of their goodwill, to deal firmly, because conscientiously, with brethren coming into the ministry in abnormal ways.

If a church should have exercised its undoubted right to call some man not trained for the ministry, but in whom it has confidence, grounded on the belief that he has received exceptional spiritual endowment, the County Union would be the proper body to say in effect, "We recognise you as a Congregational minister. Socially, and in our Christian work

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we shall be glad to enter into fraternal relations; and we recognise that you, and the church of which you are minister, are justified in making the experiment on which you have embarked. But, that we may discharge our obligations to the whole fellowship of churches to which we belong, we must wait till the experiment has been justified and proved successful before we recommend that your name be admitted into the full fellowship and privileges of the denomination."

It is possible to distinguish the spiritual office of pastor from denominational privileges which may or may not be associated with it; and there is no reason why the exercise of the pastoral office should carry with it immediate admission to a Sustentation Fund or a Superannuation Fund. This may come afterwards, and quite naturally, when it has been continued

for long enough to give some guarantee of personal character, and of some understanding of the principles of the denomination; and evidence of loyal adhesion in practice and preaching to those principles. No man would have any right to consider himself aggrieved if the standing orders of the denomination imposed such a time test of his services; and the duration of the time test should be sufficiently long to give the same proof of stability of character, and fixity of purpose, as

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is given by a college course of six or seven years. Indeed, it seems right and fitting that the admission to the fellowship of the denomination should be recognised as a distinct act, and associated with a public religious service, whether a minister has been trained in a college or not. Where the lines of action were clearly defined by a representative and authoritative council, the County Unions might be trusted to carry them out with sympathy and firmness.

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WANTED—A NAME.

No part of Dr. Parker's proposals met with such general criticism as the name which he proposed to give to the organised body of Churches—"The United Congregational Church." The name was not a happy one; and yet much of the criticism directed against it was based upon a failure to understand what it was that Dr. Parker was proposing to name. His suggestion was, at least, an endeavour to give a name to a great unnamed entity, which has become a real factor in our Churches.

The entity for which a name is wanted can be clearly distinguished from those which are already named—

(1) We recognise the existence of the Local Church; and so central and vital is its place in our conception of the Christian life, that we choose to reserve the name "Church" chiefly for that body of believers accustomed to worship and work together.

(2) We recognise also a Church Universal,

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which includes all who are in Christ—the whole Fellowship of Believers, a church which is not co-terminous with any fellowship of churches, or with any race of mankind, but penetrates into all; and the use of the word "Church" in this sense, which is scriptural, does not risk any confusion with the Local Church. It is clearly a body which can only be conceived ideally, and, while it imparts significance to all churches, it is not a ground for the special claims of any one.

(3) Quite distinct from these, and of a different order altogether in idea, is that organisation which may be described as a "National Council of the Churches." With regard to this, we cannot do otherwise than adhere to the traditional position of our churches as it was put two hundred and thirty years ago—"*Quod non est Ecclesia, non potest exercere jurisdictionem Ecclesiasticam: Synodus non est Ecclesia.*" A Synod may be an organ of churches appointing its members, it is not itself a Church.

Much of the criticism of Dr. Parker's proposals seemed to be directed against the idea that he proposed to give the name "United Congregational Church" to a "National Congregational Council."

(4) But, clearly distinguished from each of these three, there is another entity which requires

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a name. It is made up of the body of believers who share the common life, and traditions, and creed of the Congregational Churches. They have the common *ethos* which is the bond of a society.

An important reading, adopted by the Revisers in Acts ix. 31, indicates that this common *ethos,* creating a real society, was already recognised in the beginning of the Church's history—"So the Church throughout all Judaea, and Galilee, and Samaria had peace, being edified; and, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, was multiplied." If this word is used in its proper sense here, and stands not merely for a common national consciousness in the Jewish Christian Churches, but for that community of moral and spiritual life which grows out of a common relation to Christ, it is remarkable that the existence of this fellowship should have been so soon recognised, for it is with the body of churches as with the individual—it is, as a rule, only slowly that the individual grows a soul, and becomes conscious of vital relations to the Unseen. Very often it is not until our roots in the earthly life are nearly loosened that we discover how much of our life draws its strength and power of persistence, not from the soil, but from the sunlight. So also in Churches,

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it is most often by struggle, by common work, by common ventures of faith, by facing common difficulties, and especially, under the pressure of persecution, that they become conscious that they have grown a common soul, realised the solidarity of the spiritual life, and that this, one of the deepest elements in their life, is what creates their unity.

What we require then is a name for the spirit and body, which is made up of those who share the true fellowship of our churches. Though no name suggested is quite unexceptionable, the "United Congregational Church" might almost be defended on the analogy of the Church in Judasa and Galilee and Samaria; but the use of this phrase would indicate that the Church consciousness is dominated by the national consciousness. To us this would be a return to "beggarly elements." If the word "congregation" could be used as it was in translating the Septuagint as equivalent to the "ecclesia," it might be possible to describe this fellowship as the "*United Congregation.*" But as "congregation" suggests, in our common use, a contrast with "Church," this is probably impossible. Until some happier thought is found, the least exceptionable name seems to be "Congregational Church Union."

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THE DISTANT GOAL-
FREE CHURCH UNION IN ENGLAND.

AT the Meeting of the Baptist Union in Edinburgh, in October 1901, Dr. Clifford concluded his address, on "The Place of Baptists in the progress of the Kingdom of God," with these words:—"That is the faith by which we live, the witness we have to give, and in so far as we can unite, *organically* unite, with other churches, *without impairing that witness,* we are prepared to do so to the extent of merging our existence, if need be, in theirs, and co-operating with them for the accomplishment of the chief task of all the churches—the bringing of a lost world to God. And for myself, I will say I am, and have been for many years, seeking to do whatever has been possible to me to prepare the way for the *inevitable* union, by serving other

churches freely, judging them fairly, rejoicing in their successes, using their treasures of wisdom and knowledge, appraising their excellences and advantages at their highest value, breathing the

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spirit of affection, and by co-operation in advancing the work of righteousness and peace amongst men."

This is the attitude which will undoubtedly be taken by the leaders of all the Free Church denominations in the near future. The desire for union is destined to grow, and it will take the form of practical measures as soon as it is clear how the denominations can achieve organic union while maintaining their witness to that truth in doctrine, or polity, which it is the duty of each to safeguard. The strength of the various Free Church denominations, as co-operating forces working for the Kingdom of God, is so great that none of it ought to be dissipated merely in protest and dissidence. If the churches can be persuaded to unite in the steady constructive work of spiritual and moral leadership, they could afford to leave protest and criticism to the weaker, more numerous and more divided religious parties which form the so-called National Church. It is well worth while to consider—(1) the value of such a union; (2) the forces which make for union, and the limitations which hinder it; (3) the place of Congregationalists in this endeavour; (4) the immediate steps which may be taken in this direction.

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I.

To satisfy our Lord.

The consideration which should have supreme weight with all the churches is that, in achieving such a union, they are fulfilling the will of the Head of the Church, and putting themselves in harmony with His prayer for their future "that they all may be one." The full meaning of the personality of Christ, the full expression of His mind, and the full range of His activities, will not be seen, or understood, or felt by the world, until He has made the whole fellowship of Christian Churches one great instrument for doing His will and revealing His purpose. Every step in the direction of union which is made, without sacrificing fidelity to some command of the Master Himself, represents a step in progress towards that great end. Those who feel that the supreme satisfaction of life lies in enabling Christ, in one more respect, to "see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied," will feel that they need no other incentive than this to set them working for a union between the churches, which would make denominational jealousies, rivalries, and animosities, and sectarian pettiness and limitations, impossible.

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To finish our Work.

To others, the vision of the work which may be accomplished by the United Free churches of England may appeal more strongly. Many things which have long been desired by our

churches, but regarded as impossible, would become possible to such a body. The churches united in England would carry with them the union of the corresponding churches in the Colonies, and would at once become the strongest link and the most efficient organ of the Christian consciousness throughout the Empire. There would be no comparison possible between the real power of such a fellowship of churches and that of Anglicanism.

The United Free churches of England and her Colonies would have a great work to do in binding the Empire together, and in safeguarding the interests of international peace. They would inevitably draw closer the ties between the two great branches of the Anglo-Saxon people separated by the Atlantic. It might gradually become possible to repair some part of the great blunder and crime which separated the two branches of the English stock.

There would be real and solid work to be done by a Triennial Council formed by delegation, for specific purposes, in connection with Home and

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England and the States.

Foreign Missions, from the Denominational Councils of England and America. In all those national interests in which the Christian consciousness ought to be heard, because "it sees life steadily, and sees it whole," the United Free Churches might shape the policy and the legislation of the country; as, for instance, in such matters as the limitations and suppression of the drink traffic, as it at present exists; in securing education of the best quality without distinction of class, and freed from the restrictions of creed for every child; and, ultimately, in securing the representa-

tion in Parliament of those interests which are human rather than monetary. It was the saying of an African chief "that in England we take great care of our property, but throw away the lives of our people." There is no power which can balance the power of property, except the power of religion; and religion in England owes it to itself that it shall not be continually made subject to the power of vested interests and property in the councils of the State. If this is to come about it must come through churches which are free. Never since the Reformation has the Church of England shown herself capable of forming any independent judgment distinct from that of the Government of the moment, nor of expressing the

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Christian consciousness on any question in which it differed from popular opinion.

Historic Unions.

It is well to remember that all great nations have been built up by the union of separate tribes or folk; this seems to be an essential condition of strength, perhaps because many principles, tendencies, strains of character, meet and mingle in the united life. In the history of the Hebrew nation, historical analysis has led us to see the union of many tribes, brought about by the sole force of a religion, and the personalities in whom the religion lived. The history of England is largely the history of the fusion of many peoples into one; and the extraordinary success of the United States within the last fifty years is largely to be traced to the same causes. Unity plus difference has a higher utility, and larger place in nature, than unity at the cost of differences. For this reason, among others, the future of the Free Churches of England is much more hopeful than

that of the so-called National Church. When union comes in the Free Churches, it will be union with the recognition of differences; while the National Church is committed to a union which can only be maintained in form by ignoring differences which really exist.

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II.

The Nature of the Factors which make for Union, and for Disunion.

The important fact of the situation is that the forces which make for union are spiritual and moral—which human nature grows into and feels to be more and more important as it grows—while the tendencies and limitations which make for separation are historical and traditional, out of which we tend to grow. The distinctive features of each denomination are connected with its historical origin—each has arisen with a mission to perform; each has its own saints and heroes, and the circumstances under which it arose have left their mark on the character of the Church; each denomination feels, and rightly, that it has a characteristic contribution to make to the total religious life of the nation; each is proud, and reasonably, of the contribution made by its past history. England would have been an immeasurably poorer England without Independents like Oliver Cromwell and John Milton; without Baptists like John Bunyan or Charles Spurgeon. The Congregational and the Anglican Churches of to-day would have been very different had we not received as a gift from God, John Wesley,

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Charles Wesley, and George Whitfield; Richard Baxter described himself as a moderate Episcopalian, and was in practice a Presbyterian, but those who are called to be saints in every Christian church to-day, long before they enter into their "everlasting rest," are glad to be of his communion. The Church, as a whole, is richer and not poorer for the varieties of Christian character which enter into its composition; and it would be a serious loss if any characteristic developed by Christian service of a certain kind, maintained through several generations, were to be lost. We need mystics and evangelists, theologians and organisers, prophets and ecclesiastics, men who can lead forlorn hopes, and those who can "stand and wait" in Christian service.

Differences of this kind, which are historic and temperamental, need not prevent the recognition of a unity which underlies them. The religious impulse is the same, though it shows itself in many forms. It is always and everywhere the movement of a son towards a Father; the response of human love to the Divine love; the reaching out of faith from the finite towards the infinite and eternal Spirit; and everywhere it has the same ultimate significance—it means that human life must seek its completeness in God, and find its perfection in fellowship with Him.

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The Pauline Unities.

On the side of union are all the great spiritual unities: there is one body, for all recognise that the Church is composed of all who have fellowship with Christ; one Spirit, the Spirit which proceeds from Christ, and becomes increasingly the animating power in all who obey Him; and there is one hope of our calling, for

there is no real difference in the conception of the goal of the Christian life separating the Evangelical Churches; for all of them, the goal is the life transfigured and glorified in the light, and into the likeness, of Christ. There is one Lord—for all the signs of the times are that Christ is to be more and more, and His interpreters less and less, to the Evangelical Churches; one faith, for the less necessary we think it to define and split hairs in matters of doctrine, the more supreme becomes that great venture of will and heart and intellect—the act of faith which makes God real, and eternity present, in the midst of time; and there is one baptism or entrance into the Kingdom; for whatever differences there may be as to the administration of an external rite, the churches are at one in the great fundamental truth, that entrance into the Church means a baptism of the Spirit, and a birth into the Spiritual Kingdom.

And there is one God and Father of all, who is

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over all, and through all, and in all. The gradual unfolding of God's Fatherhood has dwarfed into comparative insignificance some of the doctrinal, and many of the ecclesiastical barriers, which divided the Free Churches, and has made it clear that what we have to deal with in men is not two great classes, one elect and the other reprobate; nor even one saved by a conscious experience, and the other unsaved for the want of it; but rather the great family of mankind in which the members stand in different relations to the common Father. In some, the Fatherhood is realised and the sonship is conscious, personal, vital, reciprocating the Father's love; in some, this gracious relation is intermittently present, and at other times absent altogether from consciousness; in others it is latent, unrealised, and impotent—a relation which exists only potentially but not at all in actuality.

This great change—Copernican in its significance—has brought the barriers which separate the churches down from heaven to earth, and has at least suggested that, as the barriers are earth-born, they may be surmounted.

Union by Faith and Love.

It is a great point gained to delimit the areas of union and the areas of difference. The churches are appreciably nearer one another when it is clear that their differences are not moral

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nor spiritual, but intellectual and traditional,—for this means that the differences are formal and not material. It was Luther who said, quoting Ambrose:—"Away with Logicians, where wee must beleeve Fishermen. For in the mysteries of Faith the majesty of the matter will not bee pent within the narrow roome of Reason, nor come under the roof of Syllogisme."[1] The prospect of union lies in the determination of the churches, not indeed to ignore their differences, but to dwell upon the greater importance of the unities; recognising that the reason for union is not that the differences are unimportant, but that the unities are more important. Hitherto, endeavours to create union have turned either on the divine right of some form of church government, or subscription to elaborate doctrinal creeds, or uniformity in ritual and worship. It is safe to say that any such attempt would not be successful now, and will probably never again be made.

Unity is not to be attained by formulating a comprehensive creed, for theological progress is not in the direction of simplicity, but of variety and complexity. Progress is made by more exact definition in theological science, and

retreat towards simpler expressions, if attempted, is not likely to be satisfactory. Nor do the

[1] Quoted in Dr. Briggs' *Whither,* p. 246.

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lines of theological difference run parallel with the lines of separation between the Free Church denominations; if we think of the Free Churches as divided horizontally, the doctrinal differences may be said to run laterally. It is increasingly recognised that doctrinal pledges at the beginning of a ministry are of little value; men feel their way into their creeds by the experiences of life. *Pectus facit theologum.* So that, while churches are bound to take every reasonable precaution as to the education and admission of ministers, they will probably come to trust for substantial orthodoxy less to creed subscription, more to the maintenance of spiritual fellowship between church and church.

III.

Blessed are the Peacemakers!

The share which Congregationalists may take in the movement towards union is marked out by their history, training, and present traditions. As the eldest in the fraternity of English Nonconformist churches, it falls to them to take the first steps. In doing so, they will be returning to the best traditions of the denomination. In the seventeenth century, their leaders were men who stood upon the great

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unities, and who tried to avoid splitting the Church on small matters of ritual and points of logic. They were men like John Howe, who said, when he entered the Independent Church, that he had stood aloof so long only because

he thought stress was laid on distinguishing peculiarities; but, if he might be admitted, on Catholic terms would gladly become a Congregational Church member:[1] or, like Jeremiah Burroughs, who said:—

> "Why should we not think it possible for us to go along close together in love and peace, though in some things our judgments and practices be apparently different one from another? I will give you who are scholars a sentence to write upon your study doores, as needfull an one in these times as any; it is this: *Opinionum varietas, et opiniantium unitas non sunt* ἀσυσατα—variety of opinions, and unity of those that hold them, may stand together. There hath been much ado to get us to agree; we laboured to get our opinions into one, but they will not come together. It may be in our endeavours for agreement we have begun at the wrong end. Let us try what we can do at the other end; it may be we shall have better success

[1] Horton's *John Howe,* p. 7.

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> there. Let us labour to joyne our hearts, to engage our affections one to another; if we cannot be of one mind that we may agree, let us agree that we may be of one mind."

In spite of all the temptations to a sectarian life, the Congregational churches have always retained something of the catholic sentiment associated with their origin. It is a common observation that undenominational missions, and inter-denominational societies, often fall to be managed by Congregationalists. The Free Church movement in many parts of the country owes its vitality to the fact, that it falls in so closely with the line of thought and sentiment familiar to Congregational leaders and churches. Many Congregational societies, in fact, contain in their trust-deeds

phrases which indicate that the founders were thinking of Protestant Free Churchmen as a whole, rather than the members of a single denomination.

One serious obstacle to effective action is being removed by the recent developments of Congregationalism. Union would have been impossible between organised bodies and an unorganised fellowship. Churches which had made adequate provision for sustentation and retirement could not treat on equal terms with a fellowship which

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had no such provisions; and the want of a denominational Council, which could speak with any authority as representing the churches, would present an insuperable obstacle to any attempts at organic federation.

These difficulties are now in the way of being removed, and it will be one of the natural developments for which we may look in the future that, when each of the Free Church denominations has a representative Council, these Councils will enter upon diplomatic relations with one another. The four planes along which movements towards organic union might move are gradually becoming clear in those elements of organisation which are common to the Congregational and other Free Church denominations.

(*a*) *The Local Churches of all Denominations.*—The sacredness and the completeness of the individual church must be safeguarded in those things which relate to its spiritual life and moral progress. The inviolability of the inner life of the church in its relation to Christ, and the fellowship of the church with others in all that relates to the extension of the Kingdom, are the principles which must be recognised and made compatible in working.

(*b*) *The Historic Pastorate in all its Forms.*—For the sake of order, continuity, responsibility,

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and development, the Historic Pastorate, either lay, settled, or itinerating, has justified its existence as a necessity in the life of all the churches.

(*c*) *Representative Bodies in which the Lay and Clerical Elements are both represented, and to which the Churches delegate authority for Specific Purposes.*—This is a different matter from government by Presbyteries which claimed Divine right to rule the churches; a claim which led our fathers to maintain that "new Presbyter was only old Priest writ large." When the authority is delegated, and its existence recognised as necessary on the ground of due order, and its functions specifically limited to those things which concern the common life of the churches, the representative authority need not conflict with the traditions of any of the churches. In England, it is said that the actual administration of the Presbyterian system is much in this spirit.

(*d*) *A Presidential Episcopate,* in which, either from year to year, or for a longer period, the common interests and sentiment of the body of churches are reposed in, and expressed by, a single elected leader.

Each of the Free Churches has something corresponding to these four planes of organisation, and the similarity makes it possible to regard these as the elements to be worked into an organic union.

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IV.

What are the possible steps which may be taken in the near future towards realising this ideal?

An Interdenominational Council.

(*a*) The National Free Church Council has made it possible for us to think of an Interdenominational Council, which would be a strength to all the denominations. The step which would have to be taken now to such a Council, is a much shorter one than it would have been a few years ago. If the Presbyterian Assembly and the Methodist Conferences, the Congregational and Baptist Unions, and other denominational Councils were asked to nominate their representatives and give them certain specific duties to perform, the beginning of an organic Federation would be made.

Common Education for Ministry.

(*b*) The work of such a Council might be made enormously fruitful and important in such matters as the following:—Steps should be taken as soon as possible in the direction of a common education for the ministry of the Free Churches. Already a large amount of co-operation is possible, but a great deal more might easily be done. The trust-deeds of Mansfield College were drawn with the intention of leaving it open, that it might become

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the unfettered centre of a Theological Faculty for Free Churchmen in the University of Oxford;[1] Denominational teaching in Hebrew, early Church history, biblical exegesis, philosophy, and the like, is both impossible and absurd. About, roughly, nine-tenths of the teaching required for ministerial education is the same to whatever denomination a man may belong. The common-sense method would be to provide for the nine-tenths in common, and the remaining tenth separately. The effect of co-education in this sense would at once be felt all through the Churches. College

friendships would gradually develop into church friendships; personal links would tend to become organic links.

Common Books of Worship and Instruction.

(*c*) The experiment made by the publication of the Free Church Catechism was a most interesting and suggestive one. Unfortunately the Catechism has not been adopted as a text-book in Sunday schools as systematically as it might have been; but the issue of the book opens up great possibilities. An Interdenominational Council might have a committee constantly in session preparing books

[1] Dr. Fairbairn, writing on this point, says, "there is nothing to prevent other Free Church denominations from appointing their own professors."

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which were to be used in the schools and churches of all the denominations. Each denomination has now a valuable collection of hymns; some day one may hope to see a Free Church hymn-book which will contain the best of the hymns from each of the denominational hymnals. Such a book would become a very valuable bond between the denominations, and would gradually create a great body of common sentiment and thought. So also with books of Prayer and Worship; where there are churches prepared to use a responsive service, and to train the children of the schools by catechetical methods, it is well that carefully-prepared books should be available.

Common Methods.

(*d*) The growth of great Interdenominational Societies, such as the Sunday School Union and the

Christian Endeavour Union, has suggested that there are common methods which are adaptable to the needs of all the Free Churches. It is a curious anomaly in our present position that the training of young people, which, by common consent, is one of the most important things which the Churches have to do, has largely passed out of the hands of the Churches themselves, and into the hands of those who exercise an irresponsible authority. An Interdenomina-

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tional Council, which really represented the Free Churches, would have a magnificent sphere of influence in bringing these various societies into line, and making efficient provision for the training of young people in our Sunday Schools, Endeavour Societies, and in the permanent duties of citizenship, temperance, church loyalty, and interest in the Kingdom of God.

Missions.

(*e*) The supreme interest of an Interdenominational Council would be its power to inspire and lead aggressive work in the interest of the Kingdom. In the Foreign field there is every reason for co-operation and consultation; and all that is required is that the Home Societies shall be as closely in touch with one another as the missionaries whom they send out often are in the Foreign field. At home, mission work is both intensive and extensive. It means the careful husbanding of such personalities as have the power of stimulating and uplifting the spiritual life, and the utilising of these over large areas for quickening the life of the churches. In such work the Free Church Council has already tested the possibilities and shown the way. It also means the support of Missions in the form of Settlements,

Institutional Churches, or of Preaching Halls, amongst the dense populations of our cities; and

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includes making provision for the maintenance of evangelical life in the villages of England.

It may seem to many that a programme of this kind is too ideal and remote to influence present action. But if men are to give the whole of heart and mind and strength to work in churches of Christ, it is well to give them causes to work for which are worth all the enthusiasm and devotion they can give. It is to be hoped that there are many to whom the ideals that are here imperfectly expressed will appeal with the force of a divinely quickened vision. They are at least an attempt to bring present facts into the light of the Christ Who fills the future; to see through clouds and dimness, through past failures and present difficulties, the clear light of His will for the Churches that claim Him as Lord; and, whatever else may be doubtful, it is certain that there can be no reformation, either religious or social, except in the nearer vision of His face, and a more responsive beat of the hearts of His people to the impulse of His love. Nothing is possible without the warmer breath of His Spirit, for which we wait; but the warmer breath of His Spirit is the one thing which we may have for the asking. Over the door of the future, as over the door of the Kingdom, it is written: "He that asketh receiveth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

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APPENDIX.

I.—American Councils.

If County Unions are destined to become in England the organs of associated Churches, as Church Councils have become in the United States, it may be of some real service to those who are interested in the county organisation of Congregationalism to have a short analysis of the methods and work of the American Councils. They have succeeded so skilfully in safeguarding the privileges and rights of the individual church, and, at the same time, in giving expression to the united sentiment and judgment of the churches linked by neighbourhood, that there is much to be learned by studying their history.

It would be impossible for English Congregationalists to attempt to imitate all the features of American Councils; nor would it be desirable if it were possible. At the present time Congregationalism in the Central and Western States of America is said to be in some respects more akin to English traditions and methods, than to those of New England; and it is not quite certain yet as to which type will prove the stronger and more

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efficient. But the value of the experience of two hundred years of church life in New England is, not that it presents models for exact imitation, but that it illustrates principles which may be adapted to our own circumstances.

The New England churches may be said to have proved conclusively that a strong, vigorous, progressive type of Congregational life is compatible with the full recognition of the rights of the fellow-

ship of churches. In certain matters, such as the very difficult question of how to deal with the pastorate of a church which has become a scandal and a disgrace to the denomination, they have found and used a method of denominational discipline. In England we have made the Independency of the Church so absolute that, if a pastor chooses to take advantage of his position, it is almost impregnable to the friends of Congregationalism as well as its enemies. They have discovered a normal method of establishing new churches, which we still require. They have made provision for conferring specific and temporary powers upon representatives of the churches, so that the churches can act unitedly for a given object without creating the machinery of permanent paid officials. They have made provision for the very important occasions when a church feels the need of brotherly advice and counsel, and recognise that there is nothing inconsistent with Independence in the frank confession of that need. They have provided a convenient method by which the public opinion of neighbouring churches, with

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regard to those questions which affect the welfare of the neigbourhood, may be conveniently expressed; and have minimised, and probably nullified, those occasional expressions of ultra-Independency which are indistinguishable from sheer obstinacy and selfishness.

If it is possible to retain a true, vigorous, and efficient Congregational polity, without the disadvantages which have so often deprived it of its proper influence, we may safely make experiments in the direction indicated by the American Councils, using the materials with which we are familiar in the County Unions and local associations.

In order to illustrate the work of Congregational Church Councils in New England, which are, of course, to be distinguished from the National Councils referred to on pages 255–257, the following analysis of Dr. Dexter's chapter on "Ecclesiastical Councils" is added. The chapter is No. X. in the volume entitled *The Congregationalism of the Last Three Hundred Years as seen in its Literature;* and in the analysis here given Dr. Dexter's own words are, as far as possible, adhered to.

"Any occasion where Congregational fellowship is desired by individuals in church relation, or where help is needed to secure light, peace, or purity, is a proper one for the calling of a Council; provided the matter relate to interests common to the churches. Mere differences of opinion between a majority and a minority within a church may, with consent of all parties, be

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referred to a Council for advice, but only on such consent; because the relations of all with other churches continue undisturbed by such differences. When a church member is under process of discipline, if he can persuade the church to join him in referring the unfinished matter to a Council, it may be proper that such a Council be called; but it is not proper, should the church refuse so to refer it, for him to go forward and call one; because his relations with other churches as yet remain undisturbed, and it is to be charitably presumed that his own church will do him justice when the final disposal of his case shall have been reached. Should he be cut off from church fellowship, however, in the face of his conscientious conviction that his exclusion is not warranted by the facts in the case, or by the Word of God, he will then acquire the right, after having respectfully asked the church to join him in calling a Council for a new hearing of his case, and

been unreasonably refused, to appeal to other churches for advice and for relief; because his relations to them have been disturbed by his excommunication. So, if a member in good and regular standing in one church ask to be dismissed to a sister church, and a letter of dismission be denied him, he may request a Council, and should the church refuse, may himself call one to give him relief; because his right of transfer, which is part of the common fellowship of the churches, has been interfered with, which interference is strictly an interruption

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of comity with another church, as well as a wrong done to himself."[1]

(*a*) Any competent number of Christian believers who wish to organise a church, and to be admitted to Congregational fellowship, may call a Council for that purpose, (*b*) Any Congregational church, desiring to obtain the fellowship of the churches in its choice or dismission of a pastor, or needing advice, or the healing of troubles, may call a Council therefor. (*c*) A member, or members, aggrieved (as to any point which touches, or may touch, the fellowship of the churches) in a church unreasonably refusing a Council for advice thereon, may call a Council; because this is the only feasible means of a redress, which the Gospel must be assumed in some way to provide.

"As to their form, Ecclesiastical Councils called together by individuals seeking church fellowship, or by churches, as such, which lack light or peace, are called *Advisory;* such as are assembled by the co-action of two parties standing in any sort against each other, are called *Mutual]* and such as are convened on call of one such party, whom others have unreasonably refused to join in measures for a Mutual Council, are called *Ex-parte* Councils.

How Councils are regularly called.—"This has been uniformly done by a form of written request,

[1] The lack of such an arrangement in England has occasionally caused serious inconvenience. At present there is no final resort short of the interference of trustees, which cannot be regarded as a normal way of doing anything in a Christian church.—ED.

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which has received the technical name of a Letter-Missive. When Jonathan Edwards was to be ordained at Northampton, the letter of invitation addressed to the pastors of the churches selected, of date 25th January 1726–7, read thus:—

"'Rev. Sir,—Our Church do desire your presence and attendance to ordain Mr. Jonathan Edwards, this day three weeks.

'Your servant,

'SOLOMON STODDART.

'To the Rev. Mr. John Williams,

Pastor of Deerfield.'

"The experience of more than two centuries has favoured, and perhaps it may be said finally established as a fundamental principle of the subject, the conclusion that the Letter-Missive so defines and restricts the powers as well as duties of a Council, that, when assembled, it is tied as closely to the provisions of that letter as a New England town-meeting is to the terms of the legal warrant by which it has been called.

Membership.—"As has been intimated, the Congregational theory of Councils is that the churches are present in them; and as they cannot assemble *en masse,* it is by delegation. It has been nearly or quite invariable that the pastor be *ex officio* one delegate; but it has been almost uniformly held that pastors sit in Councils, not because they are pastors, but because, being such, their churches have sent them. There have been occasionally, however, Councils which pastors have only been invited to constitute; as also cases where an associa-

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tion of ministers has been requested to act as a Council.

"From about 1753 the old practice seems, with occasional modifications, to have been gradually changed until it has become a well-established usage for each church to confine itself on ordinary occasions to a single lay delegate with its pastor, and it has even been thought irregular for a church temporarily destitute of a pastor to send two lay delegates unless specially so requested in its Letter-Missive, and unless all the Letters-Missive indicate that such request has been made.

"As churches have the perfect right, for cause, to refuse to sit in Council when invited, so Councils can exercise the right to inquire into the standing of the churches from which delegates have been sent; and members may retire if they become satisfied that the good faith involved in that exercise of fellowship, which inheres in sitting with the representatives of a church in Council, has been abused.

"The *organisation* is the simplest possible, including the choice only of the two indispensables; a presiding officer to preserve order, and guide business, and a scribe to put that business on record.

Business.—"This must be held rigidly to the exact specifications of the Letter-Missive. The churches have that letter before them when voting whether to respond to its request; and that is the time for objection, if in anything its terms do not seem to them regular or suitable. Having accepted

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that invitation, and constituted the Council, it is wholly irregular to introduce any business not therein specified. The *obiter dictum* of a Congregational Council, though sensible in its intent, and

even useful in its quality, can come into existence only as an impertinence. This does not, however, make it improper that a Council be specifically called to do more than one thing.

Result.—"After the case which it has been called to consider has been fully presented to a Council, and it has gone into private session, it is usual for the roll to be called, and for each member, as briefly as he may, to indicate what advice he thinks ought to be given; after which a committee is appointed to embody the general judgment thus expressed in a formal 'Result,' which is read, criticised, and amended, until the majority becomes ready to take it as it stands; it being felt, however, to be of great consequence, when possible, for absolute unanimity to be attained in its adoption."

II.—Ecclesiastical Councils having to do with Fellowship.

Such fellowship respects churches and ministers.

Councils respecting the Recognition of Churches.—"The strict theory of the formation of a Congregational church involves the close co-action of the individuals composing it, and the Council advising it. It is admitted that any number of devout

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people who are led by the providence of God to think it their duty, may anywhere associate as an independent church, and subsequently invite a Council to receive it into Congregational fellowship; and that, having been thus received, it becomes a Congregational church. Possibly in a majority of cases in a new country, where long distances retard intercommunication, such a course may often be expedient; while a church already fully organised under some other polity, has been known to desire to become, and to be recognised

as, a Congregational church. But as it is obvious that previous organisation reserves altogether from the Council the main question whether such a church ought to exist at such a point,—usually the better, and certainly the more Congregational way, is for the parties proposing organisation to invite a Council to consider in its broadest aspects the question whether it be advisable that a church be formed, as well as whether it be prepared to stand on such a basis of faith and polity as should admit it to fellowship. Cases have occurred where a church has been organised so near to existing churches as inevitably to weaken it, or them; while churches have been known to be originated in reasons personal to some minister or layman, which would have been discountenanced in advance had opportunity been given.

"It has always been held to be a part of the duty of a Council called to *fellowship* a new church, to inquire into its position as to doctrine and polity as well as into the personal piety of its members;

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and when, for any reason, such a Council has not found cause to proceed, it has never hesitated to decline the responsibility asked at its hands.

Councils respecting the Disfellowshiping of Churches.—"The Cambridge Platform made distinct provision for this, when sadly needful, under the name of the 'third way of communion.' It followed the analogy suggested for individual churches by Christ's rule for dealing with individual members; the first step being the friendly admonition by some aggrieved church of its offending sister; the second, the taking two or more churches with it to second that admonition; the third, the telling it to a synod of churches called for the purpose—which 'having declared them to be obstinate, particular churches approving and accepting of the judgment of the synod, are to

declare the sentence of non-communion respectively concerning them.'

Councils respecting the Disbandment of Churches.—"In the driftings and shiftings of population it occasionally happens that the extinction of a local church becomes a providential necessity. Having been formed by mutual covenant of its members, on advice of the neighbouring churches in Council, it is orderly that it be disbanded through a process which reverses this—that is, by the unanimous consent of its members, after advice of Council. There may be reasons why such an enfeebled body should be maintained, at least a little longer, which may not present themselves so forcibly to its own members as to others; and,

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in any event, the communion of churches seems to require that so grave a step be taken only on general consent. It has been usual for such a Council advising disbandment to suggest that the church empower its clerk, or a special committee, to grant letters of dismission and commendation of all the members to such churches as they may elect.

Councils called to Advise as to Fellowship in the case of Ministers.

Ordination as a (so-called) Evangelist.—"The only ordination known to the New Testament was ordination over a particular church of one of its own members as its pastor.[1] The fathers of Congregationalism knew no other. With them to be a minister was to be a pastor, and to lay down the pastorate was to lay down the ministry. But the Christian community has been imperceptibly so leavened with ideas from the hierarchical systems, that Congregationalists have very generally imbibed the notion that

ordination admits a man to an order of the ministry, and endues him with a mysterious power to baptize, to dispense the elements at the Lord's Supper, and to pronounce the benediction, which no unordained person can possess.

[1] Dr. Dexter's zeal for the old separatist protest against "ministers at large" has carried him too far here; see Acts xiii. 1–3. The ordination of Saul and Barnabas was by the church at Antioch "*for* the work whereunto I have called them." This is one of the cases where traditional independency is *not* a complete theory of work and life in the Kingdom of God.—Ed.

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This notion has led to what is called the 'ordination' as 'evangelists' of young men about to go out as Home or Foreign missionaries; or who are intending to 'supply' some church not prepared to receive a permanent pastor, or who are unwilling to tie themselves down to a permanent pastorate. And as the immense growth of the nation toward the Pacific has brought it about that there may be many churches at the West which think themselves too feeble to settle a pastor because of their immaturity through too little immigration, and many churches at the East which think themselves too feeble to settle a pastor because of their obsolescence through too much emigration; it has come about that a large number of Congregational ordinations, East and West, are now annually ordinations to labour 'as an evangelist.' Ever and anon, however, some warning voice is raised, and some testimony given on the other side. *The Settlement of Pastors.*—"I have said that the original idea of Congregationalism was that a church selects and (usually through a Council) sets apart one of its members to be its pastor. In later years this took the form of the expectation that a candidate shall connect himself with the church which he is to serve, either before or immediately after his settlement. But the great

influx of Presbyterian ideas transfused into modern Congregationalism by the frequent passage of ministers trained in Presbyterian pastorates to Congregational pulpits, has widely infected both

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our churches and our ministry with the hierarchical notion that a minister belongs, not to any particular church, but to the Church Universal.[1] Of late years, however, the practical evils arising from this have been recognised, and its inconsistency with Congregational principles emphasised.

The Dismission of Pastors.—"On the side of the Church and the churches, the object of taking the advice of a Council for the dismission of a pastor is not only that what was begun in fellowship be ended with the same, but that any possible wrongdoing of either party may have fraternal revision and rebuke. On the side of the pastor, the object of it is that he may leave the old field and go elsewhere, with the friendly endorsement—if it be deserved—of those to whom his character is intimately known.

[1] I am not quite satisfied with this representation. The pure Congregationalism for which Dr. Dexter contends is itself modern. The State Church Congregationalism of Massachusetts and Connecticut introduced and carried over the "parish" with its powers, analogous to those of the trustees and seat-proprietors which Dr. Macfadyen so resolutely opposed. All through the early years of American Congregationalism, Presbyterianism was modifying it as it did English Congregationalism of the same period.—[A. Mackennal.]

Both in New England and in the northern counties of England this modified Congregationalism has shown some elements of strength which are lacking in the doctrinaire type. The New Testament precedents (see note above) decidedly favour what may be called "modified Congregationalism," as distinguished from doctrinaire independency, in matters of the ministry and service of the Churches. A wise statesmanship will discover how to retain the Independent doctrine of the spiritual and ideal significance of the Church with the forms of organisation which are best able to preserve and extend it,—ED.

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"The most frequent occasion for the calling of Councils to dissolve the pastoral relation, has been

the growth of various internal reasons which have led pastor or people, or both, to the conclusion that the best good of all requires its sundering. This condition of things has sometimes arisen from sickness or more unfortunate trouble in the minister's own family, impairing the efficiency or acceptableness of his service; sometimes from the feeling shared by all parties that—often for unassigned if not unassignable reasons—the usefulness of the pastoral relation has come to an end, or been so seriously impaired as to make its termination expedient; sometimes the main cause apparent has been a mutual agreement, doubtless pre-supposing some other reason unexpressed; sometimes the only ground alleged and acted upon has been a strong conviction of duty on the pastor's part; more often the failure of his health, or of pecuniary support from unavoidable external circumstances, or the preacher's inability or neglect to till faithfully the spiritual soil; most often, I fear, the existence of difficulty and opposition necessitating a change."

III.—Ecclesiastical Councils called to Give Light.

"The advice tendered by such Councils has been as various as the ever-varying needs of the churches: here, which of two contesting bodies

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ought fairly to be recognised as the church; there, the relation of female and minor members to church privileges; elsewhere, what is properly a mutual council, what the just view of questions as to baptism, what the true Sabbath keeping, what the proper connection between the church and the Sunday school, or the choir; what the true Christian ground to be taken on such questions as slavery, public affairs, Freemasonry, and the like.

"Among particulars of practical advice given by Councils for light, have been such as the following: that all churches should adopt definite standing rules, that their members may have the means of knowing what action, in given circumstances, will be lawful; that church members holding unused letters of dismission, remain still subject to the watch and care of the church which gave the letters; that church members have no right to absent themselves from the Lord's Supper because of dissatisfaction with their pastor or with fellow-communicants; that all church members are bound to contribute, according to their ability, to the support of the means of grace; that a new covenant adopted by a church can bind only new members, with such old ones as freely assent to the same; that a pastor holds no negative over the vote of his church; that the penalty of suspension from church privilege is not one contemplated in the New Testament; that it is wrong to 'drop' members; that the extreme vote of excommunication should require for its validity the concurrence of at least two-thirds of all voting; that pulpit

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ministrations chosen for their cheapness are a mistake, and 'stated supplies,' when needful, a necessary evil; that the first seven verses of the sixth chapter of the first of Paul's epistles to the Church at Corinth ought not to be so misinterpreted, as in these days to throw upon the Church the duty to make itself a court for the settlement of secular difficulties; that intemperance and the traffic in intoxicating drinks are inconsistent with Christian character; that raffling at fairs is a species of doing ill that good may come, which the godly wise should discountenance; that the decision made by the casting of the lot ought to be accepted as that of 'God in His providence'; that a church member does not well to marry a

profane person; and that the offence against the seventh commandment is the only Scriptural ground for divorce, and binds the criminal parties, if unmarried, to marry."

IV.—Ecclesiastical Councils called in the Interests of Peace.

"Usually the unpleasantness has arisen from a difference of opinion in regard to some man or measure, exacerbated by treatment alike injudicious and unchristian, until separation has been effected, and a second church established. Where a genuine gospel principle is involved, and the needs of the community have sanctioned another church, this evil has sometimes been overruled for good,—as

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in the famous case of the Old South Church in Boston, as long ago as 1669.

"To the credit of their good sense be it said that Councils have almost uniformly advised that 'the Church of God is not a creation of civil law; and legal decisions are of no authority in deciding what is, or is not, a church.'

"Other occasions for Councils in the interests of peace have been to seek to heal difficulties which have arisen from conflicting desires in calling a pastor, conflicting judgments in building a house of worship, and variant, if not hostile, interpretations of polity; but more often they have been found in troubles from overbearing deacons, incompatible pastors, cases of hasty and unreasonable discipline, and—if the truth must be told—of turbulent and heady minorities."

V.—Ecclesiastical Councils in the Interest of Purity.

"The object of a Council for purity is twofold: precisely following the pregnant analogy of the divinely outlined method of the Church itself in dealing with individual offenders; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil; or, if they will not hear, putting away the offenders, because they are aliens as truly

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as if they were heathen men and publicans,—doing this because commanded, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to withdraw from all that walk disorderly, for a testimony against them, and that the way of truth be not evil spoken of. As a church must labour for its own purity, and that of the community, by withdrawing fellowship from an erring and impenitent member, so a Council—authorised for that purpose in its creation—may, on behalf of the churches which it represents, seek for their purity, and that of all, by subducting fellowship from an erring and impenitent pastor or church; that so the way of Congregational truth be not evil spoken of, and churches and pastors which are sound and orthodox be not made partakers of other men's sins.

"This subject, I may say in passing, would reward full well an exact study; because it illustrates the flexibility of Congregationalism, and because its results are reassuring in their striking exemplification of the fact that religion offers no exception to the common principle, that the simplest machinery usually does the best work.

Opposing and Inconsistent Decisions.—"Looked at from a Presbyterian point of view—as such

matters are extremely apt to be regarded, even by those who mean to be, and think they are, good Congregationalists—such oppositions of judgment intimate absurdity, if not anarchy. But regarded as friendly advice tendered from opposite points of view by Christian neighbours, and naturally coloured by their pre-existent judgments and

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desires, such results were neither alarming nor ridiculous. Each radiated some light upon the obscurity; and every little helped. Each, no doubt, mitigated some harshness of passion, and silently drew off electricity that might else have struck and shattered. Or, to change the figure, by their very mildness these soothed and healed, helping the constitution to cure the wound, eject the poison, and recover from the disease. Their very absence of conclusive power prevented them from perpetuating the possible injustice of a hasty, if not harsh, verdict, and so left things in better shape for the advent of that day of sober second correctional thought which always comes to good men; whose self-reproach and real, if tardy, humiliation tends speedily to efface ancient scars and beautify old battle-grounds of doctrine or practice, as nature hastens to hide the harshness of winter landscapes under her wealth of summer garlanding.

"Our fathers emphasised the *religious* side of Councils. Much prayer accompanied and interpenetrated them. Especially was this true of Councils for peace. The intent was to heighten the then practical present power of godliness in all hearts, until, under the quickening of the Holy Ghost, the glow and heat of consecration to the great Head of the Church and to His service should lovingly conquer all discordant judgments, and, so to speak, fuse and weld together into one

all divided hearts. Any falling out by the way between real Christians must be the consequence

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of some spiritual declension. What is needed for its satisfactory removal is the cure of that declension. A genuine revival of religion would do the work. No hardness of feeling could stand before it. While, in the quickening of the spiritual intellection, it would carry the soul up to heights of reason and candour, to whose new fields of vision adjustments, before impossible, become so easy as to be inevitable. The first endeavour then of a a Council for peace should be to broaden and deepen the practical effect of the Gospel in the souls of those who are parties to the quarrel. Much prayer, and a distinct aim to illuminate and invigorate the conscience, and subdue and humble the spirit, are vital to success; while such endeavour may reasonably assure itself of the loving aid of that Gracious Being who 'doth appoint meanes, not to cast out from Him him that is expelled.' Such a Council is not a 'court of Jesus Christ,' which, on sworn testimony and after special pleading, is to declare a judgment to which all must conform, and under which one party at the least must smart with disappointment, if not with some sense of wrong; it is the affectionate, persuasive presence of near friends, tenderly concerned to have all that is unclear clarified, and all that is selfish or exorbitant, or only mistaken and misdone, readjusted into the harmony of absolute right."

This summary of extracts, from a long and somewhat involved chapter, is full of suggestion

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and interest, but perhaps its most important feature is the distinction which Dr. Dexter draws

between the spirit of Presbyterianism as he understands it, and the spirit of associated Congregationalism. Judged from an outside point of view, there are obvious similarities between the action of a Council and that of a Presbytery, and some of Dr. Dexter's readers and critics will probably draw the line between Congregational and Presbyterian developments somewhat differently from the way he has done it: but the difference between the spirit of the two systems is real and distinctive. Congregationalism embodies a developing and progressive ideal of church life, which includes both a developing moral ideal, a developing organic life, and a developing spiritual ideal of the churches' relation to God in Christ; even its confessions of faith are neither stereotyped nor final. The function which Congregationalism gives to the representatives of associated churches is partly that of leadership, partly the registration of verdicts of the common consciousness. They are to be ahead of the churches themselves in vision and knowledge and judgment—through submitting the question to the light of Christ in conscience and by prayer,—but they are only to register as decisions those verdicts in which the common consciousness of the communities they represent has confirmed their own. This, of course, differs *toto caelo* from the authoritative functions of a body which may claim to rule or over-rule the churches; it carries a stage further into the

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relations of the fellowship of churches the spiritual principle of the local church, that men are, ideally, united in Christian fellowship that they may act on one another like positive and negative poles of a magnet, each supplying what is lacking in another. Given the development of one mind, and one spirit, a common ideal, and a common aim in a fellowship of Congregational churches, there is

nothing to prevent them from a more complete co-operation than obtains in any other system, but it would be the co-operation of the whole body of believers in the churches through their representatives, rather than the action of authoritative and ruling officials.

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Intercession for Churches of Christ,

III.

SAVIOUR CHRIST, Who art Thyself the Head of the whole Church, stir in us the love of what Thou lovest, the desires which are Thine. May the Kingdom of God daily become more lovely to our eyes; send an arousal of faith, that we may see that only faith is needed for the speedy establishment of that Kingdom in the hearts of men. Sustain us, that in our labours for it we may run and not grow weary.

Increase among us men and women full of faith and hope, large in charity, catholic in their sympathies, abundant in labours, rich in inward devotedness, Christlike in sacrificial zeal, strong in their quietness and confidence in Thee.

Enrich our churches with the heavenly gifts, that they may be apt in their apprehension of Divine truth, patiently and humbly receptive of all revelations of God and His ways, clear-sighted in their visions of duty, free from all that narrows the exceeding breadth of the Divine commandment, evangelical in spirit, and bold in proclaiming the Gospel. Help them by the inspiration of Thy Word, that they may be faithful in discharge of national duty, neither seeking popular favour, nor concealing the whole counsel of God in times of national peril, but by the manifestation of the Truth commending themselves to the conscience of men as in the sight of God.

Through Jesus Christ. Amen.

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