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ART. I.—REVIEW OF THE WORKS OF PRESIDENT EDWARDS.

*The Works of President Edwards, with a memoir of his life, in ten volumes.*  
S. Converse. 1829.

FOR this valuable edition of the works of President Edwards, the public are indebted to the Rev. Sereno Edwards Dwight, though his name as editor does not appear on the title page. Numerous and important additions have been made to the writings of Edwards, from manuscripts in the possession of Mr. Dwight; and in the memoir which fills the whole of the first volume, a great variety of interesting information is laid before the public for the first time. To this memoir we shall now confine our attention; having ventured on a former occasion\* to express our views at some length, respecting the principal productions of the great New-England divine.

As a memoir, this volume is indeed swelled to an unwonted size; but few persons, we believe, who read it with proper care, will wish it to have been much, if at all, abridged. Should they meet with a few things which might have been omitted, they will wonder that so much of what they now meet with for the first time, had not been published long before.

For our own part, we are much gratified with the industry of Mr. Dwight in collecting his biographical sketches of the ancestors of President Edwards; and have been particularly interested in the record which he has inserted in the appendix, concerning Richard Edwards, grandfather of him who has immortalized the name. Such notices of the early fathers of New-England are invaluable.

ART. II.—REVIEW OF HAWES' TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF THE PILGRIMS.

*A Tribute to the Memory of the Pilgrims, and a vindication of the congregational churches of New-England.* By JOEL HAWES, pastor of the first church in Hartford. Hartford: Cooke and Co. 1830.

THE old puritans are "a sect every where spoken against," and yet every where regarded with deference. The influence which they have exerted in giving character to the world, is necessarily admitted by all who know or regard historical truth. There has been no class of men since the days of the apostles, whose principles and institutions contained so much right and so little wrong, or were calculated to do so much good and so little hurt. Yet they have always lain under obloquy. It has been the fashion to revile them. Even those who have most fully admitted the good they achieved for their posterity and for mankind, have still felt obliged to reproach, or at liberty to misunderstand their principles. But after all, it is to their principles we are to look for the source of their actions, because they were, in an eminent degree, men of principle. So deep rooted and universal is the enmity to the puritans, that there is not a leading author in the whole circle of English literature, whose subjects led to speak of them at all, who has not abused them. Even to this day, if one of their descendants sets himself to inquire, in the most dispassionate manner, what were the principles which made his forefathers such men, it is sure to call forth a new volley of obloquy and ridicule. As claiming descent from the puritans, (higher honor than the blood of royalty,) we think it our duty to venerate their character and to vindicate them, as far as truth will go, from the opprobrium with which it suits the enemies of their principles to load their memory. Meaning to embrace all fit opportunities of doing this, we express our thanks to the respected author of the work before us, for the ability and zeal with which he has paid his willing "Tribute to the Memory of the Pilgrims." Such a tribute is becoming from the successor of Thomas Hooker; and is given with beautiful consistency by one who has in his doctrine and his character so much of genuine puritanism.

The "Tribute" consists of six lectures, which the author tells us "were delivered on successive sabbath evenings during the months of March and April, 1830." Lecture I. is on the Constitution and Order of the Primitive Churches—II. Origin, Principles, and Influence of the congregational churches of New-England—III. Deductions from the foregoing Lectures, shewing the striking resemblance of these churches to the primitive churches,

their adaptedness to all the exigences of the church, even up to the millennium, and their entire harmony with the genius of our civil institutions—IV. Character and Vindication of the Pilgrims—V. Causes and Extent of Declension in the congregational churches of New-England—VI. Means of Recovery and Defense.

It is hardly necessary to say, that these topics have been treated by one who sincerely believes, and cordially loves the principles, character and institutions of our pilgrim fathers, and that they have been handled with ability and in the spirit of christian candor. The author loves truth, and seeks it diligently, judges with discrimination, and presents the results of all his studies in a style of great simplicity and perspicuity. Every father of a family in New-England, who wishes to bring up his children to reverence the memory of their ancestors, should make them acquainted with this book. As a specimen, and for the sake of refreshing the memory of our readers respecting the early history of the puritans, we copy from the beginning of the second lecture the following brief historical sketch.

THE object of the present Lecture is to trace the origin, exhibit the principles, and illustrate the influence, of the Congregational Churches of New England.

These churches, then, are not to be regarded as novel institutions, known only in modern times. They are rather the revival of the churches that were planted in the earliest and best days of christianity. The immediate agents of this revival were a society of christians in the north of England, who in 1602, separated from the established church, and 'entered into a covenant to study the scriptures, as the only rule of religion, rejecting all human inventions, and walking in all the ways of the Lord, made known or to be made known to them, according to the best of their endeavors, *whatever it might cost them.*'

This holy purpose was formed in troublous times; and the execution of it cost the venerated founders of these churches incredible hardship and suffering. Popery had indeed received its death blow in England, in the reign of Henry the eighth. But its corrupt and persecuting principles were so inwrought into the very texture of society, and so combined with all the civil and religious institutions of the country, that for nearly a century and a half, they maintained a fierce and bloody conflict with the rights of conscience and the dearest hopes of man. During the reign of Edward the sixth, the reformation made rapid advances. But by a mysterious providence, that wise and pious prince died at the early age of sixteen; and by his untimely death, all the noble designs of reformation, which he is said to have formed, were at once blasted. Mary succeeded, —who was a bigoted papist, and of course, a bitter enemy of reform. Popery was immediately restored in all its abominations, and the reformers, who about this time received the name of puritans, were persecuted with relentless cruelty. At the accession of Elizabeth, in 1558, the fires of Smithfield were quenched, and the power of Rome restrained. But the reformation during her reign, instead of advancing, went back. Though professedly a protestant, she was in heart more than half a papist. Toleration was a virtue unknown to her thoughts, and abhorrent to her feelings; and though she restored the reformed liturgy of Edward, it was not without making many alterations in it for the worse, and establishing, anew, many of

This is a specimen of the ministers under whose instructions the pilgrims formed their character. These men regarded the question of church government as one of the chief things that require christian investigation in the latter days. They felt a conviction, that they were laying foundations for the final glory of the church, and that it was an important time to inquire for truth. Says Hooker in his preface, "truth seemeth to be in travell, having fulfilled her appointed months, and the instant opportunity of her deliverance drawing on apace." They had large expectations concerning the progress of the church in the knowledge of divine things; and church order was one of the main subjects on which they expected and desired additional light.

Hooker has doubtless expressed a common sentiment among them, where he says,

"These two things seem to be great reserves of inquiry for this last age of the world.

"1. Wherein the spirituall will of Christ's kingdome consists, the manner how it is revealed and dispensed to the souls of his servants inwardly.

"2. The order and manner how the government of his kingdome is managed outwardly in his churches.

"Upon these two hinges the tedious agitations that are stirring in the earth turn—to set forwards the *shakings of heaven and earth*, which are to be seen even at this day."

The successors of these men have pursued the first of these inquiries, concerning the operations of divine grace in regeneration and sanctification, with diligence and with much success. The other has been of late too much neglected.

As another evidence of the interest which our fathers felt in the subject, we quote from Increase Mather, President of Harvard college, a man of eminent piety and learning, and a very discerning mind.

"I profess, I look upon the discovery and settlement of the congregational way as the boon, the gratuity, the largess of divine bounty, which the Lord graciously bestowed on his people, that followed him into this wilderness. Here good people that came over, shewed more love, zeal, and affectionate desire of communion with God in *pure* worship and ordinances, and did more in order to it, than others; and the Lord did more for them than for any people in the world, in shewing them the pattern of his house, and the true scriptural way of church government and administrations."

Such men, so qualified, did not take up a question which they deemed so important, and decide it without inquiry or argument. They had also many peculiar advantages for deciding it right. They were not acting under any control as to church government. Indeed they met this question more free from civil entanglements, than any other modern churches. The whole power of civil affairs was in the hands of members of the church. Their communi-

ty was in fact, what no other has been, a christian commonwealth. This made them differ from all the reformed churches of Europe, every one of which regulated its policy under more or less influence from government. They had no human founder. There was no one man, living or dead, whose opinion was authority with them, as that of Calvin was to the presbyterians, and that of Wesley to the methodists. They had every interest in favor of deciding right, for they cast themselves wholly upon God's protection, having no human hope whatever when they left their country. Of course they could only expect the divine blessing upon their enterprise, by so forming their institutions as to please God. They acted under the distinct perception that they were called to serve God specifically in this way, by establishing such church order as, on the fullest inquiry, should appear most agreeable to his will. They were also called to suffer the loss of all things, on the very account of their mode of procedure in church affairs. No other churches have ever been so specifically called to act and suffer on this very point, and had therefore so much reason to expect a special divine guidance in regard to it.

The clergy also came well prepared to their investigations. The body of them were men of learning, and their minds were strengthened by the times in which they lived. They could not have been brought to the adoption of the congregational plan by the love of power, for it is the very essence of congregationalism that it throws all power into the hands of the people, and decides all church questions by the vote of the majority. They could not have been driven to it reluctantly by the spirit of liberty among the people, for there never were ministers who enjoyed more of the confidence and respect of their congregations. They embodied a large share of the learning in the community. They were the devoted friends of civil liberty. Many of them were possessed of considerable estates, which they freely expended for the common good. The magistrates and people were in the constant practice of consulting the ministers in regard to all important measures. All this shows that congregationalism did not arise out of any popular jealousy, guarding against clerical usurpation.

Congregationalism, therefore, was established by the deliberate, unbiased, intelligent, solemn and prayerful judgment of a large number of sober and pious men, who set themselves to the inquiry under the weightiest responsibilities, and risked every thing upon its being according to the will of God. As such, it has a claim to a respectful hearing. We submit it to the candid judgment of our readers, whether they can mention any body of christians since the days of the apostles, who have settled their church order under circumstances so favorable to the prevalence of sim-

ple truth, and the mere authority of the word of God; and whether there is any church organization, which, from the known circumstances in which it originated, could seem so likely to have been adopted under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

What is congregationalism?

1. The first leading principle of congregationalism respects the original formation of a church. It is held that, when it is for edification, professing christians have a natural right to covenant together for enjoying and maintaining gospel institutions; and that by so covenanting, they become a church. Such a church has the power to do all church acts, admit new members, exclude the unworthy, choose their own officers, and remove them for just cause. So far as they give evidence of walking in the faith and order of the gospel, they have a claim to be recognized and treated as a church of Christ, by all others. A church is simply an association of christians, for enjoying the ordinances of Christ; and being organized, they are charged by him with the execution of his laws in discipline, etc. The right to form a church, does not descend from any superior kind of church, or from any imaginary organized body, called the church universal. The church universal consists of the whole body of true believers, of every name. But it has not, and never was intended to have, a visible organization on earth. Consequently, it never was capable of putting forth any corporate acts; nor can any man or body of men, rightfully claim to represent the church universal.

It is the act of covenanting together, that unites persons into a church. The church is a corporation before it has officers, otherwise it could never put forth the corporate act of choosing officers. For, as *our* Hooker says, "The setting of the candle in the candlestick, presupposeth the candlestick."

2. All church power, i. e. the power which Jesus Christ has delegated for administering his laws, resides in the church itself. Of course, all church questions are to be determined by the church, or the voice of the majority, independent of any control or prohibition, either of church officers or councils. This is a point for which our fathers, both ministers and others, earnestly contended, against both presbyterians and prelatists. It is the great point now in debate concerning *civil* affairs, whether the power of government is conferred by the people on the officers of state, or whether privilege is conceded to the people by their rulers. Most denominations of christians hold, that church power originally belongs to an imaginary body, called the church universal, or to the superior officers of the church, and is thence dispensed to others; so that particular congregations or churches are formed *under* them, and receive all power to act from this superior authority.

3. That all church questions are to be determined by the church itself, by the voice or vote of the brotherhood. According to our fathers, the power of church officers is to preside, and to execute. But for any of them, whether called prelates, or preachers, or elders, to claim the prerogative of acting for the church as a matter of right, is usurpation. And for the brotherhood to give it up to their rulers, as a matter of convenience, or to save themselves the labor and responsibility of self-government, is a desertion of duty. Our fathers held that the Lord Jesus Christ has laid upon the churches the duty of watching over their own members, of administering discipline, and of choosing and removing their officers, as an important exercise of christian graces, and a necessary means of sanctification.

4. That individual churches have no superior but the Lord Jesus Christ. They are constituted under his laws, and subject to no other authoritative control than his. Every church is complete in itself, and has all the authority which can reside in any corporate body of believers; and is therefore competent to perform all church acts, without warrant from any superior church power, and without appeal to any superior church judicatory. The whole authority residing in the church, and being placed there by Jesus Christ, it follows of course, that no other earthly tribunal is competent to reverse the determination of the church. And any authoritative acts of a bishop, or presbytery, or council, purporting to control or reverse the acts of a church, are acts of usurpation, and merely void.

The largeness of a church gives it no additional authority; it is still a church, and nothing more, whether it embraces the occupants of "an upper chamber," or the professed believers of a city, a province, or an empire. The only churches which our Lord has appointed or recognized, as organized corporations possessing church power, are all on an equality.

Congregationalism rejects the idea of a presbyterial or provincial church, constituted by the union of several distinct churches, and exercising a control over its members. It is manifest, that when the rulers of a church are delegated to act in presbytery or classis, they exercise a jurisdiction over other churches, and over the individual members of other churches, which they could not by virtue merely of their office in their own church. But a new jurisdiction implies a new office, that of commissioners. And as the power of commissioners extends to the reversing of any act of the rulers of the particular church, it is a higher office. But there is lawfully no office in the church, but such as Christ appoints; and no rightful jurisdiction but such as he bestows.

According to the principles of congregationalism, all councils, consociations, presbyteries, classes, conferences, synods, or what-

ever else they may be called, composed of delegates from many churches, whether they are officers or private brethren, have only *advisory* power. Hooker lays this down in the following unqualified terms.

The truth is, *a particular congregation is the highest tribunal*, unto which the party may appeal in the third place: If private counsell, or the witness of two have seemed to proceed too much shareply, and with too much rigor against him, before the tribunal of the church the cause may easily be scanned, and sentence executed according to Christ. If difficulties arise in the proceeding, the counsell of other churches should be sought to clear the truth; but the *power of censure* rests still in the congregation, where Christ placed it. Survey, Part iv. p. 19.

That is, in cases of discipline, whatever aid may be sought from other churches, the power of censure still remains in the particular church. And whatever the ecclesiastical council may determine, their acts have no force until adopted by the church. And of course, the church may adopt them, or not, according to their own judgment. This is grounded on Matt. xviii. 17. "And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he will not hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

Congregationalists think this a divine warrant for making the voice of the church decisive in all cases. They regard all re-hearings before councils, as only aids to the church to come to a proper determination. And all appeals, properly so called, carrying the final act away from the church to some other body, are but human devices, to improve the institutions of Christ.

So far as the reason of the thing is concerned, they approve of the scripture plan. They think it more likely that cases will be decided right by a man's own neighbors, than by strangers; that the advice of other churches is the best safeguard against error; that if we carry a question ever so far by appeals, the farther we carry it, the less practicable it is to make the tribunal acquainted with the merits of the case; that in the end it must be decided by imperfect men; that the supreme tribunal, whatever it be, is liable to error, and its errors cannot be corrected this side the judgment seat, while the evil consequences of the error to an individual or a church, are more easily remedied, if the decision of the church is final. They think that, so far as experience and observation go to prove any thing, the character and privileges of a church member, are as safe here as under any other government, and as likely to receive the protecting care of his Master, if he lives as he ought. And moreover, they cannot close their eyes to the grievous wrong, of compelling a whole church to walk in fellowship with a man, whom they conscientiously believe to have been convicted, on sufficient

evidence, of crimes which render him unworthy of the communion of saints. But what settles the question in their view, is, that the power of the church itself, to choose its officers and exercise discipline, is a delegated power, derived from the authority of Christ, and consequently they have no right to delegate their powers, and transfer their responsibilities, to others.

5. That separate churches stand in such a relation to each other, as obligates them to a certain mutual recognition and care, which is called *communion of churches*. The greatest difficulty which is found, in conveying to those who are accustomed to other modes of church government, a clear understanding of congregational principles, respects the relation or connection of separate churches. Most of the objections which we have heard against the institutions of our fathers, have gone upon the idea that they held the churches to be independent of each other, as if each church were a world by itself. Nothing can be farther from the truth. The congregational churches never were independents. As proof, we give two extracts, one from Thomas Hooker, the father of congregationalism in Connecticut, the other from the Synod of Cambridge, which was held A. D. 1648, and composed of "the Elders and Messengers," or pastors and delegates, of all the New-England churches, including Mr. Cotton of Boston, and the greater part of the ministers that *first* came to America.

She, (the church,) is so far subject to the consociation of churches, that she is bound, in case of doubt and difficulty, to crave their counsel, and if it be according to God, to follow it: and if she shall err from the rule, and continue obstinate therein, they have authority to renounce the right hand of fellowship with her.

In the second sense, the church may be said to be independent, namely, sufficient to attain her end; and therefore hath complete power, being rightly constituted, to exercise all the ordinances of God."

Survey, part II. page 80.

Although churches be distinct, and therefore may not be confounded one with another, and equal, and therefore have no dominion one over another; yet all 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, whence is derived a communion suitable thereto. Rev. i. 4; Cant. viii. 3; Rom. xvi. 16; 1 Cor. xvi. 19; Acts xv. 23; Rev. ii. 1.—Cambridge Platform, chap. xv. p. 54.

The obligation of churches to perform the various acts of fellowship, arises from their relation to each other and to their common Lord. It does not arise from any express agreement to be in fellowship; nor does it depend on their more or less complete coincidence in doctrine and practice, but on the simple fact that they are churches of Christ. As such, they have a common interest, are pursuing a common object, possess a common charac-

ter, serve a common Lord, and live in a common hope; and their relations are such, that each is deeply interested in the welfare of the other. If one suffers by declension, error, iniquity, or persecution, all suffer, for the *cause* suffers. This communion of churches therefore, is not at all confined to churches that are congregational in form, or calvinistic in doctrine. It is due to all who afford evidence that Jesus Christ owns them as *his* churches. It is actually exercised to all, whose ministers we allow to preach, whose members we admit to the Lord's table with us, or to whom we extend any act of christian recognition or intercourse.

The Cambridge Platform specifies the following, as the principal ways in which church communion is exercised. 1. "By way of mutual care," in taking thought for one another's welfare, praying for one another, etc. 2. "By way of consultation;" as the church at Antioch consulted with the apostles and elders of the church at Jerusalem, when they were in difficulty about the question of circumcision. 3. "By way of admonition;" when a church lies under any public scandal, for heresy or immorality, and does not take measures for its removal. 4. "By way of participation." This is when members of other churches are admitted to the Lord's table, or their children are baptized, or the minister of one church preaches and administers ordinances to another. 5. "By way of recommendation." If the member of one church has occasion to reside in another, he is furnished with letters recommending him to fellowship, or is dismissed and recommended to membership. 6. "By way of relief;" as the churches of Galatia contributed for the relief of the church at Jerusalem.

It follows then, that all christian churches are bound to exercise mutual care and sympathy, and aid, doing one another good to the extent of their power; and that they have a right to advise and admonish each other. When a church, by its conduct, ceases to exhibit credible evidence that it is a christian church, it is proper that other churches should cease to hold communion with it, as such. From this fellowship of churches, there results as much mutual power, restraint, and influence, as is consistent with their freedom and distinctness and enough to answer all the purposes to be answered by church organization and discipline. Churches have a relation and influence and responsibility, like that which would be created, if a number of christians should be thrown together in a heathen country, and should there be desirous of doing what they could to promote the gospel around them. We may take the case of christian missionaries, of different sects, at Malta, as an instance. Each would feel tenderly alive to the spiritual welfare and purity of all the rest, and would be under obligations to sacrifice every thing but the law of God, and a good conscience,

for the sake of mutual fellowship and brotherhood. They would also exert a powerful influence over each other. No one would feel warranted to take any important step, affecting their common object, without consulting his brethren; nor would any one feel at liberty to act contrary to their deliberate judgment and advice, unless he had very weighty reasons for so doing. In any case of embarrassment or doubt or difficulty, even about the management of his own private affairs, each would still feel that it was his privilege and duty to avail himself of their counsel and aid. Sometimes he might apply to an individual, and sometimes, in more weighty affairs, to a select council of several. If they found him pursuing a course which was likely to be injurious, they would kindly advise him. If he was doing wrong, so as to bring a reproach upon religion, or weaken their hands, or embarrass their efforts in the good cause, they would admonish him of it; and if occasion required, they might go in a body, in order to give greater weight to their remonstrances. If they found him perverse, or blinded with passion, so that they could not act with him, nor recognize him as a christian brother, they would feel it necessary to withdraw from him, until he should come to himself again. All this while, there could be no act of authority, no assumption of power by one over the rest, or by the community over the individuals, no means used, but those of advice and persuasion, no influence but "light and love."

Persons so situated would also very naturally fall into certain modes and habits of intercourse and business, for mutual convenience, and the furtherance of their common end. And these modes, whether established by express agreement, or only by usage, would have a sort of binding force, so that no individual would feel at liberty to depart from them, unless they were about to lead him into that which was wrong, or for some other very powerful reason. And yet they would not be *laws*, because each individual would still feel at liberty to break them, rather than break the laws of Jesus Christ. They would be merely conventional articles, subordinate to the laws of Christ, and subordinate to their great and common end. Each would thus preserve his own individuality, and be answerable to his own Master, and stand or fall by his own acts. He could never plead the acts, or requirements, or usages of the rest, as a justification of himself. The Cambridge Platform has this very illustration of the power of churches towards each other.

Paul had no authority over Peter, yet when he saw Peter not walking with a right foot, he publicly rebuked him before the church. Though churches have no more authority one over another, than one apostle has over another, yet as one apostle might admonish another, so may one church admonish another, and yet without usurpation. p. 55.

articles, to give them a binding authority upon all the churches, or at least, to give to the churches that should adopt the platform, some peculiar legal advantages as "established churches." But the exceptions in the act destroyed its operation, so that those churches which became consociated, and those which declined, continued to enjoy all their equal legal rights and privileges.

When the plan came before the churches, it produced a great agitation. Many of the churches apprehended that the platform conferred powers upon consociations, which infringed upon the final jurisdiction of the churches; and would not consent to its adoption, until they were satisfied that such was not its intended effect. The consociation of Fairfield county, in accepting the platform, passed a vote, declarative of their understanding that the rights of the churches were not impaired.

In New-Haven county, it is said, several of the churches gave their delegates instructions to secure their constitutional rights. Mr. Pierpont, of New-Haven, who had drawn up the platform, explained its articles to their satisfaction, and it was adopted.\* Nearly a quarter of the churches, as we are informed by President Stiles, in his convention sermon, never adopted the platform at all.

It has been generally understood of late years, that the Saybrook platform has taken away from the churches the right of final decision in church proceedings, and has vested in consociations a power of deciding questions authoritatively over the churches. From the best examination we have been able to make, we are strongly inclined to doubt whether such was the original intention, either of the convention, or of the churches. The question respecting the power of councils, had always been agitated among the ministers; but the great body of them, the synods of Cambridge in 1648, and of Boston 1662, and the churches generally, had decided that councils had advisory powers only. The people were strongly attached to this principle. The term consociation was well understood, and habitually used to denote an express agreement for church communion and aid, upon congregational principles. This appears from the writings of those days, and from the reply above quoted, of the synod of Boston. The Saybrook Platform then provides for *consociations*, without defining them at all; and thus authorizes the inference, that they intended to establish consociations as every body would naturally understand them, with no greater powers than other councils. The fact, that all their language was thus explained to the New-Haven consociation, by the man who wrote it, Mr. Pierpont, confirms this presumption. It is certain, that the churches never would have accepted the plat-

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\* Todd's Narrative of the Wallingford case. p. 34.

form, if they had not so understood it. It is true, the platform says, that the consociation shall "finally issue" cases that come before them, and that the parties shall sit down determined thereby. This language, in its obvious import, would imply that the decisions of consociations were to be decisive, without going back to the church for ratification. But if we look at the history of the case, we shall find that the evil to be remedied by consociations, was not the disposition of churches to throw off the proper authority of councils, but it was the calling of council against council. See Trumbull, *Hist. Conn.* Vol. I. p. 480. If this is so, then all the platform intended by "final issue," was, that this should be the *final council*. That it was not intended to give juridical power, appears farther from the explanations, with which the New-Haven consociation accompanied their act of acceptance. The sixth article of the platform provides, that if a church *obstinately* refuse conformity to the determination of the council, they shall be reported guilty of scandalous contempt, and sentence of non-communication shall be declared. "And the churches are to approve the sentence, by withdrawing from the communion" of the offending church. This is explained to mean, that the churches are to be informed of the council's judgment, and if *they* approve the sentence, non-communication is to be declared. But without the approbation of the churches, there can be no non-communication. So in regard to the fifth article, where the platform requires the consociation, after a "final issue, to see their determination duly executed," it is explained to mean, that the council should, as a body, or by committee, "observe whether the counsel of God, sought in this way, may be complied with or refused;" i. e. they are to ascertain whether the church executes it or not. This would seem to imply as the understanding of those who made the platform, that all acts of consociation would be referred back to the church for ratification, as a matter of course. It was a matter of admitted right, or *common law*, that the final act, in all cases, belonged to the church. And the convention did not deem it necessary to enact that provision, because every body would so understand it. They were to have a standing council, instead of one selected for each occasion; and were to end the matter with one council, except in some cases of extraordinary difficulty. We cannot doubt that this was the sense in which the churches received the platform.

There were doubtless individuals among the ministers, and more among the leading politicians of that day, who contemplated a greater degree of power in consociations, as an instrument for repressing, with the strong arm of ecclesiastical authority, those dissensions which the declining state of religion let in upon the churches, and which the civil government had tried in vain to control. And this

idea was industriously kept up, until it became extensively prevalent. Afterwards, when the agitations arose about Whitfield and revival measures, the experiment was made of the powers of this machinery. Those who were opposed to the revival, attempted to employ the power of consociation, in controlling or removing those ministers who favored the work. Afterwards, in the famous Wallingford controversy, the powers of the consociation were tested, for keeping out heresy. The disastrous results of both those cases, showed that consociation is impotent to every thing but mischief, when not sustained by the judgment and conscience of the churches. And the effect has been, that consociations have since avoided measures that have the appearance of authority, and have relied on the milder means of persuasion, argument, and prayer, to secure their object, viz. the purity and harmony of the churches.

If any further evidence were needed, to prove that the Saybrook convention did not intend to renounce the principles of the puritans, and introduce a new order into the churches, or form a new denomination, it may be found in the harmony and union which has generally subsisted between the consociated churches and those which declined it. They have never treated each other at all like different denominations. Their practical administration of church affairs has been the same. Churches have joined consociation, and withdrawn from it, whenever they thought they had good reason. And unless there were circumstances which marked it as disorderly, they have withdrawn without censure and without dissatisfaction. The churches in New-Haven, and several others in the neighborhood, are disconnected from consociation. And yet they are, in every material respect, as much united to the consociated churches, as these are among themselves. They are called in to assist in ordinations and in difficulties, very much the same as if they were consociated. And the churches which are consociated, have always claimed to be perfectly free to use the consociation, or a mutual council, as seemed to be most advisable. Some call in consociation, only at the ordination of ministers, others only at their dismissal, others only in cases of discipline and difficulty, and others in all cases ecclesiastical. President Stiles says there was not one instance of ordination by consociation, for forty years after the platform. Some of the consociations have formed constitutions of their own; and nobody has ever thought of asking them, "why do ye so?"

In short, we are persuaded that consociation, according to its original design, as well as its present use, imparts no new powers to councils, and imposes no new restraints upon churches, excepting the obligation, in ordinary cases of discipline, to use a standing council instead of a select or occasional council;

that those churches which practise consociation part with no liberty, and those which withdraw from it, gain none. Consociation being only an *agreement* to practise that fellowship with other churches, the *obligation* to which arises out of their common relation to the Lord Jesus Christ, and which will abide on them as long as they remain christian churches, there is no way in which a church can become *really* independent, but by renouncing allegiance to Christ and communion with his saints. The question of formally consociating, therefore, becomes a simple inquiry, whether the union and discipline of the churches will be promoted by it. On that ground alone our churches ought to decide it. We do not doubt that, where they are kept in their proper bounds, consociations of churches are eminently calculated to promote the union and purity of the churches, and that churches are bound to consociate together, as far as they can do it consistently with the preservation of their unalienable rights. Yet the whole history of the church, and the early experience of our own churches in the cases of Guilford, Branford, and Wallingford, show that there is a tendency to the assumption of power in such bodies, and that they always need to be watched by the churches with jealous care.

We have one word to say respecting the manner in which the opinions or advice of a council settle ecclesiastical difficulties. When a case arises, which a church cannot decide to the general satisfaction of its members, a council is called in, of other churches. This may be the standing council, where consociation is practised, or it may be a council mutually chosen by the church and the other parties concerned, or a council selected by the church for its own advisement in the case. The council make themselves as fully acquainted with the matter as they can, and then express their views of what is proper to be done. In most cases, the church, and all concerned, adopt the result of the council and abide by it. A distrust of their own judgment, where passion is so liable to operate, and a suitable deference to the unbiased decisions of such a body of men, give great weight to their result. But when any party concerned is clearly convinced that the result is wrong, contrary to truth and to the word of God, they refuse to accept it. If the result respects any act of the church, of course the church must still decide whether it will perform the act recommended by the council, or not. Suppose the council advise to restore an excommunicated person. If the church are still fully convinced that he is unworthy, they refuse to restore him. He cannot then be restored, because the final act in all cases rests with the church. Then if the council, or neighboring churches, are satisfied that the church act honestly and conscientiously, all parties must leave it to the decisions of the judgment day.

We suppose there may be cases, where the conduct of a church, in rejecting the result of a council, shall be so contemptuous and obstinate, and so directly contrary to truth and evidence, as shall prove the church to act wilfully, from a disorderly spirit, which renders it unfit any longer to be recognized as a church of Christ. So the continued tolerance of any other palpable wrong, either in doctrine or morals, may make a church cease to be a church of Christ. In all cases of flagrant evil, we take it to be the congregational principle, that neighboring churches may remonstrate with the offending church, and if thought proper, several of them may join, in order to give the greater weight to their admonitions. And if all their friendly persuasions and prayers fail to reclaim the offending church, then those churches who are satisfied that this one has ceased to be a church of Christ, are bound, on their part, to cease from church fellowship with it, either by exchange of ministerial services, or by mutual participation in ordinances, or by receiving or recommending members. But this step of our communion is the act, properly, of the individual churches, each one acting under its own convictions of duty, no church, or body of churches, having a right to act for others, or to insist that all other churches shall ratify their sentence of non-communication. But such has ever been the spirit of brotherly love among congregationalists, that there have been, in our whole history, but very few cases, in which things have been suffered to go to the result of non-communication, excepting that a practical non-communication has been adopted of late years, in regard to churches that have avowed latitudinarian sentiments. Heretofore it has generally been found, that by patient inquiry, persevering efforts to persuade, and powerful appeals to the conscience, accompanied with much prayer, the case may be settled before proceeding to such extremes.

The obligation of abiding by the result of council, then, arises from the presumption afforded, that their decision is right, and not from agreement to abide by it, either express or implied. Indeed no agreement beforehand, however explicit, could rightly bind the parties any further; for no promise can oblige them to do that which, to their minds, is manifestly wrong. The small proportion of cases in which the advice of council is rejected by the churches, shows the efficiency of the system. The existing discipline and harmony of the congregational churches, prove beyond a thousand theories, the blessing of God upon this primitive mode of church government, uniting at once the most perfect freedom with all necessary subordination.

To the sons of the pilgrims, no apology is necessary for this brief exhibition of their principles. It is brought forward at this time, to awaken inquiry, and call forth discussion, till the whole

subject be cleared of its difficulties. We are not among those who believe that great and dividing errors are the inseparable concomitants of christian liberty. When all religious opinions shall be formed by the unerring standard, we believe the churches of our Lord will arrive at a substantial agreement, as well in discipline as in doctrine.

We shall be pardoned, if we now make a few remarks upon the influence which congregational principles have had upon the condition of the world. The second of the Lectures before us, is partly devoted to an exhibition of the influence of these principles in forming the character of our own community; in establishing the spirit of liberty, in diffusing intelligence, in promoting good morals, and extending evangelical religion in New-England. We wish to turn our thoughts to a wider sphere. And we wish to bring to view the truth on this subject, because the truth is alike honorable to the character of our fathers, and to the grace of God, which raised them up to be the benefactors of the world.

1. The puritan congregationalists have been the means under God, of nearly all the civil and religious liberty in the world. The puritans who came to this country, were, for more than one hundred and fifty years, the only community, which acted upon the principle that all power originates with the people; and this principle they derived from their church order. Their church order recognized the inherent right of all members to an equal voice, in deciding every question that concerns the common welfare. The civil constitution which was formed on board the *Mayflower*, before the first pilgrims landed on Plymouth rock, was based upon the principle that all men are naturally free and equal. Those colonies which first formed a republican government at the revolution, only adopted the principles which had already been in practice, for more than 150 years, among the puritans. Mr. Hume repeatedly declares, that the English owe the whole freedom of their constitution to the puritans. And if he had not been constrained by the force of evidence to admit so unwelcome a truth, it were an easy matter to prove the same thing now, to the satisfaction of any candid mind.\*

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\* The great body of Baptist churches, in this country, are congregationalists, i. e. they act upon the principle that all church questions are to be determined by the brotherhood, and that the churches are related and bound to each other, but that no ecclesiastical body has power over a church. All the influence, therefore, of their government, in favor of liberty, is the influence of congregationalism. To illustrate this, we give the following anecdote, which was communicated to the *Christian Watchman*, a few years ago, by the Rev. Dr. Fishback, of Lexington, Ky.

“*Mr. Editor*: The following circumstances, which occurred in the State of Virginia, relative to Mr. Jefferson, were detailed to me by Elder Andrew Tribble, about six years ago, who since died when ninety-two or three years old.

We need not ask where there are to be found free institutions on earth, which are not derived from those of England and the United States. In the eloquent language of the Edinburgh Review, concerning the puritan struggle for liberty under the commonwealth,

The destinies of the human race, were staked on the same cast with those of the English people. Then were first proclaimed those mighty principles, which have since worked their way into the depths of the American forests, which have roused Greece from the slavery and degradation of 2000 years, and which, from one end of Europe to the other, have kindled an unquenchable fire in the hearts of the oppressed, and loosed the knees of the oppressors with a strange and unwonted fear!

*Ed. Rev. Aug. 1825, p. 325.*

In regard to religious liberty, we find the true principles of christian toleration first developed in the writings of Milton and other puritans, in the time of the commonwealth. And though there were things done by the early governments of New-England, which none at the present day approve or justify; yet we desire it to be borne in mind, that they were done by the civil power, not by the churches; and that the object was the preservation of the public peace, not the enforcement of uniformity in religion by civil law. We are persuaded, indeed, that the more any candid person enters into the spirit and design of the pilgrims, and the more fully he realizes the difficulties of their situation, the more forbearing will be his censure of their conduct towards the quakers and baptists.

At any rate, such measures are proved to have been contrary to the genius of the people, for they were very soon repealed. We ask for another instance in that age, where intolerant laws were repealed by the genius of the people. And we present these colonies and states as the only instance on record, where the great body of the people have repealed ecclesiastical burdens from a very small minority. In Virginia, a very large body of presbyte-

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The facts may interest some of your readers—Andrew Tribble was the pastor of a small Baptist church, which held its monthly meetings at a short distance from Mr. Jefferson's house, eight or ten years before the American revolution. Mr. Jefferson attended the meetings of the church for several months in succession, and after one of them, asked Elder Tribble to go home and dine with him, with which he complied.

Mr. Tribble asked Mr. Jefferson how he was pleased with their church government? Mr. Jefferson replied, that it had struck him with great force, and had interested him much; that he considered it the only form of *pure democracy* that then existed in the world, and had concluded that it would be the *best plan of government for the American colonies*. This was several years before the declaration of American independence. To what extent this practical exhibition of religious liberty and equality, operated on Mr. Jefferson's mind, in forming his views and principles of religious and civil freedom, which were afterwards so ably exhibited, I will not say.

rians were compelled to pay for the support of the church of England, up to the time of the revolution. The same is true of New-York. In Connecticut, episcopalians were exempted from taxation in the year 1721, when there were only three episcopal congregations in the colony.

2. The rule of church fellowship, which congregationalism imposes, requires the acknowledgment of all as christians, who give credible evidence of piety : it recognizes the church state and relation, in all bodies which give credible evidence that they are formed for the objects of the gospel. The Old South Church in Boston at its formation, expressly covenanted "to hold, maintain and promote fellowship and communion with all the churches of saints." This is the true principle of congregationalism. If congregationalists become sectarian, they depart from their principles. They are bound to recognize the right of other churches, to regulate their own internal polity according to their several views of right. And we can lawfully use no other weapons than reason and argument, against those methods of church procedure which we consider either unscriptural or injurious.

Our doctrine of the equality of all churches, pledges us to extend fellowship to all bodies, large or small, which afford us reason to believe that Jesus Christ recognizes them as christian churches. In strict conformity to this principle, we believe the common form of invitation to visiting brethren, at the Lord's supper, is to invite all members, in regular standing in *christian* churches, to unite in this act of communion. The extent or intimacy of this fellowship with other churches, corresponds, of course, with the more or less perfect accordance of doctrine and discipline. Thus we see that the congregationalists are so much united with presbyterians, as to be habitually confounded with them. In England, where the congregationalists and baptists stand on the same footing, the degree of intimacy is very close. It is not unusual for ministers and churches to act together, as cordially as if there were no difference at all. Often they worship in the same meeting house. Sometimes feeble churches of the two denominations, unite in supporting the same minister. There are many cases where baptist churches employ congregational pastors, and congregational churches baptist pastors. "The distinctive principles," therefore, which hold so prominent a place in the minds of sectarians, and form an argument of so much weight in favor of standing aloof from other sects, never ought to operate on the minds of congregationalists at all. Consequently, there is no ground on which the churches can act against christian brethren, of any name, so long as they appear worthy of the name.

Congregationalism, therefore, recognizing the equality of the

the churches, and all the members, were agreed in the whole confession. But they were agreed in recognizing it, as in the main conformable to the word of God.

Being at perfect liberty to investigate for themselves, our ministers and members have not employed their best strength in defending received doctrines and modes of expression, but have carried their inquiries *forward* into the boundless field of inspired truth. We believe that nearly all the advance which has been made in two hundred years, in regard to the great doctrines of religion, has been made by congregationalists, or those who are essentially such. Fuller and Scott freely acknowledge their indebtedness to Edwards for their advance in knowledge. If smaller men disown the obligation, it proves nothing as to the present case. Indeed there are no churches but the congregational, in which a man can examine *every* subject of religion, and yet have no fear that he shall forfeit his standing, unless he makes shipwreck by putting away faith and a good conscience. Men may indeed study systems, and may study the bible to support systems; but we see not how they can ever come to the proper study of theology, unless they adopt the essential principles of congregationalism, requiring that every man should adopt opinions of his own. Let us ask, what have other churches done, towards carrying forward the reformation? In our own times, Stuart, Gibbs, and Robinson, have done more to promote the profitable study of the word of God, than all the divines of the English and Scotch churches together; and the English theologians of the present day, are going to school to American congregationalists in biblical studies, just as their fathers did to Edwards and Bellamy, in doctrinal discrimination.

4. We cannot but regard the congregational system as the only one which can secure the proper effects of discipline in the churches. The proper end of christian discipline, is the maintenance of a system of moral influence over members of the church, by the execution of Christ's laws. Merely to relieve the church from unworthy members, is only a secondary object, or rather, it is one way in which discipline seeks its end. We should not say, that the end of surgery is to cut off diseased limbs. The excision is, in fact, the opprobrium of the art, and is used only because the resources of the practitioner are exhausted, without removing the disease. The efficacy of discipline is tested, in regard to individual cases, by the skill and faithfulness with which the *private* and preliminary measures are used to reclaim the offender. Its efficiency in regard to its great end, is found in the influence which it imparts to the laws of Jesus Christ, in the conscientiousness of the people, in the prevailing conviction, that the rules of Christ's house are binding. Where this is found, we shall see a power in discipline, which few offenders can trifle with.

It is manifest that the moral influence of discipline, depends very much upon the moral sense of the religious community. We are taught this, by simply considering how powerless discipline is rendered, when the public voice does not sustain it. Suppose a man excommunicated, when the body of the church believe he did not deserve it, and what force has discipline, either upon his mind, or that of the public? In whatever form discipline is administered, then, its moral power depends on the sentiment of the church. To this our Savior himself refers it, when he says, "if he will not hear the *church*, let him be unto thee as a heathen man, and a publican." Let whoever will administer discipline, they must speak the voice of the church, or they speak to the winds. Now a minister, or a consistory, or session, does not in fact, speak the voice of the church, unless they speak just as the church thinks. And however easy it may be for the church to delegate to their virtual representatives the power to act for them, we apprehend it is difficult in this country, to persuade the people at large to let their ecclesiastical rulers *think* for them.

Our congregational system of discipline, arrives by a direct road, at the point which other modes reach circuitously, and by implication. It speaks the voice of the church, and always speaks just as the church *thinks*. It is an expression of the sentiments and convictions of the whole body. As such, it has a force in honoring Christ's laws, and in rousing the conscience of an offender, which other modes have vainly essayed to obtain by imposing forms, solemn warnings, and dreadful denunciations. If any proof is required, we appeal to the puritans. Without vaunting, we may appeal likewise to our own churches of the present day, and we are willing they should be compared with any other body of professing christians of equal extent, and equally exposed to worldly influences. And we are persuaded that the solemn forms and denunciations, with which other churches have accompanied excommunication, have weakened the power of discipline, as well as destroyed its strictness, just as capital punishment for petty offenses, destroys the authority of the laws. It is plain, that such discipline must be effectual, where there is in the church sufficient religious principle and intelligence to secure its execution. Any other mode of discipline then, just purports to be a substitute for religious principle and intelligence in the church. Other communities may admit, if they please, their incompetency to govern themselves. We hope the sons of the puritans, with their sound doctrines, their able ministry, their universal education, and their revivals of religion, will never see a necessity for engaging ecclesiastical courts of any kind to relieve them from the burden of self-government. Indeed, we are strongly disposed to question the

utility of the modern improvement of a standing committee of discipline. It may render church business easier. In like manner, dispensing with trial by jury, would render civil business easier. But in all difficult cases it is less satisfactory.

And what is the difficulty of maintaining discipline in the simple congregational way, pointed out by our Lord in Matt. xviii. 15—17? There is none, certainly, where the church are friendly to strict discipline. And in any case, it is only the difficulty of convincing the people that the offender deserves censure, or that it is their duty to execute the laws of Jesus Christ. Until this is done, discipline under any system, is powerless.

It is seriously objected against our mode of church discipline, that it makes no provision for re-examining the decision of the church, and revising it, if it is wrong. But this is no more than is true in regard to every other mode. Where an appeal is allowed, it is only an appeal to what is held to be the *church* in a larger sense, presbyterial, or synodical, or diocesan, or the like. And then if the final tribunal decides wrong, there is no remedy. You may have as long a series of appeals as is allowed in the presbyterian church, first to presbytery, then to synod, and finally to general assembly; and still you are liable to a wrong decision; the more liable, the farther the judges are removed from the knowledge of the case. But our system has an advantage which is peculiar. It gives to the final tribunal, the church, the aid of *advice*, from the concurrent wisdom and piety of the neighboring churches. In all cases of difficulty, where the church feel at a loss, or where their decision does not give general satisfaction, and where a single individual feels grieved by their acts, it is usual to request the advice and assistance of several neighboring churches. These send their pastors and some judicious members, and they together form a council, who hear the whole case, and then, after prayerful consideration, give their opinion as to what ought to be done. With the aid of this advice, the case comes again before the church for final decision. And though these councils claim no authority whatever, yet it rarely happens that a church acts contrary to the opinions of such a body of advisers. Though it is perfectly competent for them to reject the advice of council, yet in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, this "result" is final. The church may reject the result without any breach of fellowship; unless it is done under circumstances which render it proof of a disorderly spirit. In that case, the neighboring churches might individually feel bound to remonstrate with the contumacious church, and even withhold fellowship, on the ground that their conduct rendered them unworthy of the name of a christian church. But the mere act of rejecting a result of council, is not in itself, a ground of censure. Ac-

ording to our view, a church has no right to bind itself beforehand, to submit to the award of a council, right or wrong. The final responsibility rests on the church. And if they do what to their own minds is manifestly wrong, the advice of a council will not shield them from guilt.

The solemn responsibility of self-government, thus resting upon each separate church, has in itself a powerful tendency to produce that general stability of character, seriousness, carefulness, independence of opinion, and intelligence on public affairs, which so eminently distinguish the people of New-England. It has been observed by travelers, that the French people, since the revolution, are no longer distinguished by their levity of spirit. The solemn boon of self-preservation and liberty, is fast forming the nation to a greater severity of character,—thus by another experiment, unfolding to us the true cause of the sternness of our puritan fathers. Those who think frivolity a more rational enjoyment than freedom and intelligence, will of course regret the change. The same persons may rail at the sternness of the puritans.

This acting together, this mutual responsibility and watchfulness and care, this “bearing one another’s burdens,” forms the only effectual bond of union among the members of a church. Let the care of the members only be in fact,—what it is in the theory of other forms,—thrown upon the officers of the church, and there is nothing left to attach the individual members to each other. Our plan, on the other hand, lays the care upon the shoulders of every individual. Such responsibility creates a demand for the exercise of piety and intelligence; and this demand is the only means of producing the supply. Spirituality, zeal for the purity of the church, brotherly watchfulness, fidelity, and love, require exercise to make them grow. While other forms treat the people as children, incapable of self-government, they take the very course to keep them always children.

Whatever arguments are advanced against self-government in the churches, the same may be urged, and with the same pertinency, against civil liberty. Indeed, every thing we have ever heard against congregationalism, seems almost as if it had been taken word for word, from the writings of the enemies of popular freedom and equal suffrage.

5. It has been a standing objection against congregationalism, that it furnishes no barrier against the introduction of unitarianism. In fact those who can see only a single point of a subject, need only to be pointed to Boston and Massachusetts, to be filled with dread of congregationalism. We do not doubt, that many good men among the presbyterians, are truly alarmed at the rapid spread of what they call “congregational predilections,” in their body, as the sure

precursor of a relapse into unitarianism. The episcopalians are still louder in their boasts, that the liturgy forms the only sure barrier against heresy. And the Jesuits point to us all, amidst our multiplied divisions, and call upon us to return to the holy mother church as our only security.

The fact is admitted, that about one hundred and fifty congregations in Massachusetts, have become unitarian, and employ unitarian ministers. But we say, in the first place, that congregationalism is not the only form of government, which has left the doors open for error to creep in. What will episcopalians say to Dr. Scott's account of the prevalence of unitarianism among the English clergy, at the time when he commenced his ministry? In the year 1772, a petition was presented to the British parliament, signed by about two hundred and fifty clergymen of the episcopal church, who held unitarian sentiments, praying for relief from subscription to the thirty-nine articles. And when the petition was rejected, these unitarians neither left the church, nor were censured by it; but continued in regular standing, subscribing the articles, and reading the liturgy, and enjoying their ecclesiastical immunities, as before, notwithstanding their public declaration of unitarianism. Is episcopacy or a liturgy, then, a preservative against unitarianism?

At the restoration of Charles II., the presbyterians in England lost the civil ascendancy, which they had usurped over their congregational brethren, and were reduced to the same level as dissenters. Both forms stood on equal grounds. Since that time, one hundred and seventy eight orthodox congregations have become unitarian, of which from six to ten were congregational, a few were episcopal and methodist, but the great body were presbyterian. Perhaps this is the only case in which the two forms have had a trial on the same territory, and on equal terms, and we see the result.

It is but a short time since a large number of presbyterian ministers in Ireland, who had acknowledged the confession of faith, and the assembly's catechism, and were in as regular standing as any presbyterian minister could be made according to "the standards," were inquired of by the synod, whether they believed in the doctrine of the trinity; they refused to answer, but withdrew. Not a single congregational church in Ireland, we believe, has become unitarian.

There is no doubt, that a large body of unitarians are found in the Scotch national church. Men of like principles with Robertson the historian, and other advocates of lax theology, are still more numerous, and hold the power of that church; while Dr. Chalmers, himself a presbyterian, says of the Scotch congregationalists, that they form "the purest body of christians in the United Kingdom."

If congregationalism leads to unitarianism, how does it happen that unitarianism has made so little progress in Connecticut, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine? This of itself proves, that the origin of unitarianism in Massachusetts, is to be sought in something else than the form of church government. We believe, that all who *know* any thing on the subject, agree in tracing that heresy to the unhappy measure introduced by the synod of Boston in 1663. This synod recognized all baptized persons as members of the church,—a principle now laid down and contended for by most presbyterian writers. Of course it was inferred, that all such might bring their children to be baptized, without making a personal profession of saving faith. This practice, we believe, is still prevalent in many parts of the presbyterian church, and we know has been given up in some with reluctance, through an influence from New England. At the same time, the practice was adopted, of not constraining these members to come to the Lord's table, though they were acknowledged as members, and had their children baptized. This too is a presbyterian practice to this day. And this is the noted "half way covenant," which wrought such mischief among the New England churches, in the days of our fathers. We must therefore trace the declension and heresy of Massachusetts, not to their mode of government, but to the introduction of some pure *presbyterian principles and practices*.

We go farther, and aver that it is congregationalism alone, which has prevented the declension from spreading farther, and is now rapidly restoring primitive truth and order. The whole history of the declension, shows that the seat of the mischief was in Boston. Its spread was by the influence of a wealthy and refined city upon the dependent country. Nothing shows this more satisfactorily, than the circumstance of its being bounded by the lines of the state on every side. The manner in which unitarianism has generally begun in the country towns, through the influence of the merchants, lawyers, and representatives, who were in the habit of frequenting Boston, is another proof that unitarianism has been spread by the influence of the metropolis. It is a point now conceded, that the body of ministers and churches in and around Boston, became lax and even embraced unitarian sentiments, a considerable time before they avowed their departure from the ancient faith. Those who remember the course of things from 1805 to 1815, know how exceedingly difficult it was to *prove* this defection, in regard to individuals. Indeed, we doubt whether a charge of heresy could have been fastened ecclesiastically upon a single minister, up to the time when the extracts from Belsham's history were republished at Boston. How then would presbyterian government have kept out the evil?

We go farther. Let us suppose, that the churches of Massachusetts had been presbyterian, with all that sameness of character which exists among her population; and that Boston had been to them, what Philadelphia has been to the general assembly, the place of all meetings, the head quarters of learning, and the residence of those who transacted the business of the church;—the Boston presbytery, standing in the metropolitan relation, so long claimed for that of Philadelphia. This presbytery, we see, would have become unitarian without any possibility of detecting the error, and would have dispersed its ministers and its principles industriously through every presbytery, and would have gained an influence, through the forms of church polity, that nothing human could counteract. Geneva, at this moment, furnishes us with a living example of the effect of presbyterianism, in establishing unitarianism beyond the power of removal. But in Massachusetts, happily, there are no difficulties in the way of reform, excepting those which grow out of the native opposition of the heart. Only preach the gospel, and have revivals of religion, to both of which the church organization furnishes no barrier, and reform must triumph. We wonder it has never occurred to politicians, both in church and state, to consider how every thing human naturally inclines to evil rather than good. The stronger then you make it, the more powerful will it be against the good. The whole of this immense convulsion, which now agitates the church and the world, is a struggle of light and liberty against human institutions, which were formed to protect the people against themselves. In New-England, every kind of church reform is easy, because whatever recuperative power may be brought into exercise, there is no organization to counteract it. The recovery which is now so happily advancing in Massachusetts, might have cost imprisonment as in Lausanne, perhaps bloodshed, if the churches had been under presbyterian government.

In fact, the impotence of both the episcopal and presbyterian form of government, to keep out truth, is fully proved. In regard to the latter, at least, we must be allowed to say, that in every instance abroad, where it has been brought in contact with unitarianism, it has yielded to the infection. This is found true in Holland, Geneva, France, England, Scotland, and Ireland. We have no instance of the power of either form to keep out error. And we are yet without examples to prove the possibility of a reform in a presbyterian body infected with unitarianism. But congregationalism has limited the mischief, and now, by the blessing of heaven, without any aid of human safeguards, is rolling back the waves of error, and will probably soon be free from danger.

6. While urging the claims of congregationalism to christian re-

spect, on the ground of the fruit it has produced, we ought not to overlook the spirit of expansive benevolence, which has been cherished in these churches. The whole system of extended benevolence now in operation in this country, commenced in these churches, or with men whose characters were formed here. Nine tenths, at least, of all the money that has been raised in the United States for foreign missions, has been contributed in New-England; and a large share of the remainder by men educated here. The American Tract Society was transferred from New-England, and is indebted for the most of its efficiency to New-England men. The American Sunday School Union was planned in New-Haven, by a pious brother lately deceased.\* The system of charitable assistance for pious indigent young men, who are studying for the ministry, is a New-England system, and the principal funds which have been expended in this cause, have been raised here. In regard to domestic missions, we can point our presbyterian brethren to four hundred of their own churches, planted and sustained by the benevolence of the congregationalists of Connecticut alone. And all over our country, and in all denominations of christians, we see those who were educated in New-England, uniformly bearing a leading part in every operation of benevolence.

We have been struck, too, with the different motives which prompt to contributions for religious purposes. Congregationalists not being an exclusive, organized body, have none of those principles which lay the foundation of an appeal to sectarian attachments, as a motive to charity. The only appeal which can affect them, is, that souls are perishing for want of the gospel. The object held out to their view, is the extension of christianity, the diffusion of knowledge, the conversion of sinners, the establishment of *christian* churches. Among all other classes, we hear men urged to contribute for the sake of establishing *our church*, or because other denominations are occupying the field, or because it is a shame that our whole church does so little for its own extension, or because missions will do so much towards building us up at home. In all these cases, it would seem as if the idea of sectarian enlargement, if not the predominant consideration, was thought indispensable to the efficacy of other motives. Perhaps there is not a more happy evidence of the apostolical character of congregationalism, than the fact, that it furnishes no ground for such appeals to party spirit. It has nothing to talk about but the simple work of Christ.

The same character of public spirit, and judicious zeal for the general good, has ever marked the children of the puritans, in their

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\* Timothy Dwight Williams.

secular transactions. Witness their school system. Witness their efficiency in the war of the revolution; and the influence they exerted in shaping the operations of the present government of the United States. Witness the fact, that politicians, either in church or state, who were bent on self-aggrandizement, or devoted to party purposes, or opposed to the too rapid progress of improvement, have always been compelled to vilify New-England; shewing by their earnestness how much they stand in awe of a handful of educated people, whose birthright it has ever been, that each individual is free to think and act for himself.

7. As another proof of the influence of our institutions, we may observe the want of a clannish or local spirit, among the emigrants from New-England. They have never exhibited any thing like a bigoted adherence to any one set of institutions. Every where they assimilate to the churches and people where they reside, and become amalgamated with those around them. In our large towns, for instance, all other nations have societies designed to cherish the patriotic attachments of the members. A New-England society is always a dragging concern, without life, because without any thing in the habits of its members to cherish it. A New-England man, when he removes, carries his home with him. All others invariably leave their homes behind.

We doubt not, that this characteristic of our people, is a leading reason why our congregational institutions have not been extended, by the multitudes of our people who have emigrated to other parts of the country. Wherever New-England people have gone, their influence is felt in favor of public improvement and good order. But it is a remarkable fact, that they have no where, to any considerable extent, established those principles of christian liberty, for which their fathers first braved the terrors of the wilderness. A primary reason, we take it, is, that in the settled parts of the country, they have always been ready to fall in with establishments already existing. In New-York, New-Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, etc. they have always found presbyterian churches differing so little from their own in regard to doctrine, spirit, and external powers, that they have overlooked the diversity in the principles of church government. Early in the history of western emigrations, and western domestic missions, a plan was also adopted by the Presbyterian General Assembly and the General Association of Connecticut, by which presbyterians and congregationalists were effectually amalgamated in the new settlements. This plan places the two classes on equal terms, in union churches, securing to each a mode of discipline corresponding to their principles, and receiving the delegates of congregational churches, on the same terms as ruling elders, in all their ecclesiastical assemblies. When we

consider how feeble and scattered the presbyterian churches were, when this rule was adopted, and how much of their present growth and compactness has arisen from the operation of this compromise, we confess our amazement at the ground taken in the General Assembly, of refusing to admit *committee men*, as commissioners, and thus setting aside a solemn compact, and heaping obloquy on the means of their own elevation.

Another reason why congregationalists have been so entirely engaged in building up presbyterianism, is found in the general predilection of ministers towards the presbyterian form of government. We would not be understood to intimate, that the direct object of ministers is the acquisition of church power, though we rationally suppose them to be not unsusceptible to the passions of other men. But it is very natural that they should desire an easier mode of procedure, than that of subjecting all questions directly to the decision of the whole church. In a state of declension, when evils arise in the churches, and there is a want of zeal among the members, it is natural for good men to desire some arm of power, by which matters can be set right, errors exterminated, and contentions crushed, by authority. This is much easier than reformation, much more speedy in its operation than the slow process of argument and persuasion, which is needful to bring the whole body into a state of health, sufficient for the maintenance of christian purity. They forget indeed, that by substituting authority for religious principle, they only cleanse the outside of the cup, making the church *appear* more holy than it is, and thus prevent it from showing, either to the pastor or to other churches, how much it needs their counsels and their prayers.

We have sufficiently accounted for the fact, that ministers, even in New England, should be favorably inclined to presbyterianism, and that the great number of those who have emigrated, should fall in with it, and lead the churches to embrace it. Thus the christian energies of New England, have been expended in planting the gospel, and have saved our western country from popery; while the churches there, which are modeled after those of the pilgrims, are so few and scattered, that they have hardly a name to live, and are never reckoned in the enumerations of our religious census.

We do not doubt that the arrangements, by which all these churches have been thrown under the power of the general assembly, were made with the most upright intentions, from a regard to peace, for the avoidance of contention, and a solicitude for the purity of the churches, and the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom. But for ourselves, we cannot doubt that they originated in an error of judgment. The compromise has never produced peace; for the time has never been, when New England doctrines

and New England men were not subjected to obloquy and jealousy among rigid presbyterians. It has done nothing towards preserving the purity of the church, either from false doctrine, or corrupt practices. We have seen, that no church order whatever is available for this. Nor are we satisfied that it has facilitated, in any considerable degree, the establishment of christian institutions in the newly settled parts of the country. On the contrary, a large share of that intellect and energy, which ought to have been employed in diffusing the gospel, has been used up in managing the cumbrous machinery of church polity, or in contending for the first principles of christian liberty. When we look at the embarrassments which our brethren have suffered from their ecclesiastical government, at the little they have consequently accomplished for the conversion of the world abroad, and especially at recent cases, in which presbyterianism has endeavored to bring its whole force to bear in putting down New England sentiments, together with the attempts which are now making by some men at the west, to cast reproach upon the New England members of the presbyterian church, we cannot withhold our wish, that our fathers of the last generation had been more enlightened, and more firmly rooted in the ecclesiastical principles of the puritans. If all our emigrants, ministers and people, had adhered to the principles of our forefathers, a large majority of the churches now presbyterian, would have been formed on the puritan model. The general assembly would have controlled only the affairs of a small sect. The janglings, and usurpations, and jealousies, which agitate the minds and exhaust the energies of all those ministers and churches, two or three months every year, would be unknown. We are persuaded, that the amount of moral power in the churches would have been doubled. The threats of division also, would be unheard. For we believe the congregational churches constitute the only body of churches, of equal extent, since the reformation, which have walked together for two centuries without a division. We look at presbyterianism to see what is its power of securing union; and we find an enumeration of sects, Presbyterians, Cumberland Presbyterians, Reformed Presbyterians, Associate Presbyterians, Associate Reformed Presbyterians, besides the Reformed Dutch, and the True Reformed Dutch churches, all Calvinistic presbyterian, in their general principles, and differing from each other, only as being organized into different and often bitterly hostile squadrons. Truly, if congregationalism be a rope of sand, it is adamant compared with the substitute proposed for our adoption.

If any should ask how the mistake of our fathers, in establishing presbyterianism among their emigrating brethren, is to be remedied, we truly confess ourselves unable to answer. We have thrown out

these remarks, for the purpose of awakening inquiry, and courting investigation. We know, that our people will never consent to place their *civil* rights at the disposal of others; and we can account for the inconsideration with which they surrender the management of church affairs into the hands of bishops, conferences, church sessions, and presbyteries, only as showing the low value which is placed on christian privileges, compared with civil rights, and the criminal remissness of ministers in understanding and teaching the true principles of ecclesiastical procedure. Let there be light thrown on the subject, and let the churches consider their rights and the usurpations to which they are subjected, and we cheerfully leave the designation of the remedy to the God of our fathers, who in return for the self-devotion and zeal of the pilgrims for church order, gave them here in the wilderness the inestimable boon of CONGREGATIONALISM.

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### ART. III.—REVIEW OF MEMOIRS OF HOWARD.

*Memoirs of Howard, compiled from his diary, his confidential letters, and other authentic documents.* By JAMES BALDWIN BROWN. Abridged by a gentleman of Boston, from the London quarto edition. Boston: Lincoln & Edmonds. 1831.

WE are accustomed to speak of Howard, as some "visitant from heaven," charged with messages of mercy to a race of sufferers. His name can never be pronounced without veneration and gratitude. It comes over us like the spring, balmy and genial and soothing; and we so readily associate it with all that is beautiful in philanthropy, that the bare mention of the man, produces in our minds the most delightful sensations. We dwell in idea on those noble sympathies that yet attach to our fallen nature, especially when rectified and refined, (where such is the fact,) by the grace of God. Our emotions are such as might be expected to arise from contemplating some personification of mercy herself, bending over the couch of disease, or holding out the cup of consolation to the iron-bound prisoner. Our hearts, softened by so striking a spectacle of generosity, betray the luxurious feeling within, by the moisture of the eye. In Howard, we picture to our view, (and this is no more than the reality,) a man, who, like our Savior, "went about doing good," visiting the various scenes of human wretchedness, whether in the cottages of the suffering poor, or in the public receptacles of more suffering debtors and felons—relieving want whenever it was in his power to do it, rescuing the oppressed wherever his influence could reach the oppressor—and giving to the inmates of dungeons their liberty where it was consistent, and if not that, yet comforts which make the loss of it less appalling. We pic-