

THE
BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

ARTICLE I.

PASTORS AND ACTING PASTORS IN THE
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES.

BY THE REV. A. HASTINGS ROSS, D.D., PORT HURON, MICH.

WHEN the Secretary of the National Council, Rev. Alonzo H. Quint, D.D., in his triennial official report, given in 1880, raised the question whether the distinction between "pastors" and "acting pastors" ought not to be removed from the statistical tables of Congregationalists, he started an issue which has not yet been settled. It were well, if all Congregational churches and ministers would study the problem thoroughly before the meeting of the next National Council that the action there taken may be right.

In presenting the question the Secretary said: "It remains to consider whether the invidious distinction of 'p.' and 'a.p.' in our statistics should remain unamended and unqualified. Many a brother, as efficient, as permanently settled as any other, is called 'acting pastor.' Is it not wise to consider whether there is not as safe a way in considering as *pastor* a minister called by a church, accepting the call, entering upon its duties,—not for a month, of course, but with a view to permanence,—as much as a formal installation by council, taking care that there be some suitable recognition by his neighbors?"¹ His report was referred to a committee, which reported

¹ Minutes Nat. Council, 1880, pp. 52, 53.

at that session. The matter was then referred to a committee to report in 1883. This committee reported and presented a resolution obliterating "the invidious distinction." But the committee to which this last report and resolution were referred opposed such action on the ground that "the churches at the East have depended entirely upon the action of councils for ordination and installation as the safeguards of the purity of the ministry."² The question and the reports were sent to a fourth committee, to report in 1886.

We will trace this distinction between pastors and acting pastors to its occult sources. It is not found, we believe, in any land but ours, and here only in churches of New England origin. It springs, therefore, from some peculiarities of early New England.

1. *The union of church and state has indirect connection with its birth.* It is not to the discredit of the early New England churches, that they did not at once emancipate themselves from all the errors of their day. Everywhere else church and state were united, and so naturally they were joined together in the leading colonies; and being united in one body, acting in the double capacity of church and state, it was also natural for the church to seek and find protection from heresy and schism in the coercive power of the magistrate. Our New England fathers, therefore, made the ultimate ecclesiastical appeal, not to councils, but to the civil power.³ Relying on the sword, they failed to provide adequate ecclesiastical safeguards; and, when the sword in the course of time failed them, they were left unprotected, like a citadel whose wall on one side has crumbled down. Many were the attempts to remedy the defect, but, as we have shown in another place,⁴ they were only partially successful. The fact of reliance on the state to secure purity is unquestionable.

2. *The New England theory of the ministry lies at the bot-*

² Minutes Nat. Council, 1883, p. 162. ³ Cambridge Platform, ch. xvii.

⁴ *New Englander*, 1883, p. 468 sq.

tom of the distinction between pastors and acting pastors. That theory identifies the ministry with the pastorate. The ordained are ministers only while pastors of particular churches. Ceasing to be pastors they demit the ministry and become laymen. From this pastoral theory came the early ecclesiastical usages of New England, and on it the Cambridge Platform was built. This is not only conceded, but it has been said in our own day that it is "the necessary verdict of the principles of Congregationalism." We shall show, in due time, the inadequacy and consequent invalidity of this theory, which may be called the pastoral theory of the ministry; but here and now we will give the corollaries of the theory:—

a. That a pastor must be re-ordained, that is, installed, every time he changes pastorates; for through the change he becomes a layman again, though only for one hour.

b. That a pastor of one church is a layman beyond his parish, though preaching on exchange. He should not therefore administer the sacraments out of his own church.

c. That all missionaries are laymen unless pastors.

d. That there can be no ministry until a church has been organized to call to the pastorate and ordain.

e. That a pastor can be deposed from the ministry by a vote of the church he serves removing him from the pastorate, when he can be disciplined as any layman.

f. That the ministerial standing of the pastor is held in his own church composed of laymen. That church gave it in ordination, retains it, and may end it by majority vote, calling a council or not at its own discretion, unless the law interpose to enforce dismissing councils.

Here is the root of installation. When the state gave to any two churches the power to prevent ordination by a local church or by a council, as in early Massachusetts, or when a council of advice came to be made necessary to ordination or installation, as in modern usage, then no church could have a ministry of the word without consent of the churches, and its independence was threatened.

Thus, this theory of the ministry then and now, whenever ordination or installation has been used as a safeguard, has worked danger to liberty. This we shall show more fully hereafter. Here we would note the fact that this pastoral theory of the ministry has never covered the facts it should explain. Indeed, it cannot be made to harmonize with the facts. It is impossible to exclude ordained missionaries from the ministry of the word. Two years after the Cambridge Platform was framed, and while it was before the churches for approval, a man began to preach in Exeter, N. H., in 1650, and continued preaching there as minister of that town for thirty-three years; but no church seems to have been organized therein for fourteen years after his death. What was he, a layman or a minister? The theory makes him a layman,; the town treated him as a minister. Punchard gives this and other similar cases,⁴ which the Cambridge Platform was inadequate to cover. No theory can be true which does not explain all the facts. Hence we are not surprised to find:

3. *A True Theory of the Ministry Supplanting the Pastoral Theory.* The pastoral theory is so far from being the necessary verdict of the principles of Congregationalism, that the Congregational churches of England refused, in 1658, —ten years after the New England churches had put it into the Cambridge Platform,—to incorporate it in the Savoy Platform. Nor have those churches since then adopted it. Nor have the Congregational churches of any other country embraced it; and, it is believed, that few Baptists have recognized it. It was soon questioned and rejected in New England; for, in 1702, Cotton Mather said that few in this country held it fully;⁵ and, in 1708, it found no place in the Saybrook Platform of Connecticut. At last, in 1865, it was formally repudiated by our churches when they said: “The ministry includes all who are called

⁴ *History of Congregationalism*, iv. 126, 129, 131, 496.

⁵ *Magnalia*, ii. 238, 239.

of God to preach the gospel and are set apart to that work by ordination." Hence one called of God and ordained by the churches is a minister, whether a pastor, or a missionary, or a professor, or a secretary, or an editor, or retired from active service. A minister's function and standing no longer depend on the vote of a local church. This late theory is scriptural, reasonable, adequate. It covers all possible cases. It develops into the following corollaries:—

a. That re-ordination, that is, installation, is not essential to a second, third, or any subsequent pastorate, since ministerial character or function is not lost by the change.

b. That the ordained are ministers, whether missionaries, professors, secretaries, editors, or any thing else, until deposed.

c. That a pastor is a minister called to the highest office in a church, who accepts, and exercises his function in that office, as he might have exercised it as a missionary or an evangelist.

d. That his standing as a minister is not identical with his pastorate, nor can it be held in a local church, but must find a lodgement in some responsible body suitable to his wide recognition as a minister of the word, lest damage be done to the churches by ministers recognized as such but irresponsible.

e. That his church membership does not logically follow his ministry. For it cannot go with him into mission fields, until a church has been organized. The minister of Exeter, and others, above referred to, could not have taken their church membership with them, for they ministered to no churches. The writer knows a minister who was an installed pastor of a church for twenty years, whose church membership was in another and distant church all the time. We say nothing against the importance of a minister's belonging to the local church he serves, but when it is demanded of him as essential to the office of a

¹ Boston Plat., p. 66.

pastor, then, we say that recourse is had to that pastoral theory of the ministry which has been rejected after full trial. A pastor's membership in his own church, however important for fellowship and example it may be, does not belong as an essential to the true theory of the ministry.

We must dwell upon ministerial standing. As ministers under this theory are ministers whether pastors or not, they must have ministerial standing somewhere. Treated as ministers, they must be held accountable as ministers. We can no longer say of a dismissed pastor: "He is a layman, and must be disciplined as a layman, if at all, and solely by the local church to which he belongs;" for he is still a minister and recognized as such. The churches are affected by his conduct, and on this acknowledged relation between churches and ministers rests the ministerial accountability of ministers. As the standing of a minister is wider than any local church,—unlike the case under the pastoral theory,—his accountability is also wider, and naturally rests in the Association of churches in his locality. Indeed, it cannot be properly held anywhere else.*

This standing belongs to all the ordained, and is consequently wholly independent of the pastoral office. Hence installing and dismissing councils can neither give nor destroy it. They may ascertain it, in a certain sense, but they do not control it. Councils of deposition furnish only *prima facie* evidence on which the body in which ministerial standing is held may act.

This standing should be held in bodies which are themselves accountable to the fraternity of churches. Ministerial bodies are not thus accountable; but Associations of churches, united in State Associations and the National Council, constitute bodies in which ministerial standing should be held. They are composed of neighboring churches, whose inalienable right it is to give and withdraw, by vote, fellowship; and, besides, each Association is responsible for its members to the whole fraternity.

* Ross's Pocket Manual, §§ 80-5.

But is not this standing subversive of church independence? No; by no means. For each local church has the right to choose whom it will as pastor, and to dismiss him when it will. It retains as complete control over its pulpit as over its records and discipline. It can call a council of installation, dismissal, or discipline, whenever it needs one. Neither a minister nor a member, nor a body of ministers nor members, can enter a church meeting and speak or vote. They have no authority in or over a church in virtue of their ordination. Nor has an Association of churches any right or authority over the local church. Its sole jurisdiction is exhausted when it adjusts its fellowship in accord with the internal management of each local church in connection, and the conduct of each minister in connection; that is, the Association is formed, and all join it, on some understanding as to beliefs and conduct, which understanding is called a covenant by the courts, whether written or not. Now, if a member violate that covenant, it is no usurpation of power, or infringement upon rights, for the Association to make inquiry sufficient to ascertain the fact, and then treat that member accordingly. Nor does this theory make the ministry a priesthood, nor elevate them essentially above the laity. It simply recognizes as ministers of the Word those whom God has called and the churches have ordained. And this theory, in spite of the profound influence of the New England fathers, has grown upon our churches, until they have adopted it, and that too without damage to their liberties.

4. *The first appearance of "the invidious distinction."* We have stated that it grew out of a false theory of the ministry, and that its birth was fostered by the union of church and state. It does not appear in form in Upham's Ratio, published in 1844, nor does the Congregational Dictionary (1853) say anything about the distinction. It appeared first in 1857, in the general statistics of our churches then first published. Ministers in pastoral work were divided

into "pastors" and "stated supplies;" but New York, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and Kansas reported no such distinction. New York began to report it in 1862; Michigan, in 1867; the others, in or before 1870. The distinction is not hoary with age. In 1865 "stated supply" softened into "acting pastor."

In consequence of the early theory of the ministry, the pastorate involved, as we have seen, installation, or re-ordination. The theory changed, but habits prevailed. No one but the installed was a full pastor, though called and entering upon his official work. The simple "inauguration" of the fathers began to assume the nature of an essential to the idea of the pastorate, in spite of the Cambridge Platform; and it became a guard of purity, when the civil safeguards broke down, and the magistrate refused any longer to draw his sword against schism and heresy. An emergency at last came upon the churches in the Unitarian defection. Connecticut had prepared against the evil by the Saybrook Platform. Massachusetts had neglected to do so, but began immediately to seek security through installation. We note three stages in the development of this safeguard of purity:—

a. A change in the nature of installing councils. "The letters-missive for installation which passed among the churches of Massachusetts during the first two hundred years of their history," and presumably among the churches in other parts of New England, except as modified by Consociationism in Connecticut, simply invited the churches in council to give their "assistance" in setting apart a pastor to his work. But when the Unitarian apostasy came in, the letters-missive were altered so as to change the functions of installing councils. They were now invitations to "review" the action of the church issuing them, to "advise" respecting the fitness of its pastor-elect for his office and for the fellowship of the churches, and, "if judged expedient, to assist in the installation service." Against this change in the character of installing

councils, of which we shall speak more fully hereafter, an emphatic protest has recently been uttered.

b. The next step was to distinguish between pastors installed and those not installed; for churches began, for some reason, to omit installation. The Plan of Union of 1801 relieved the ministers west of New England of the need of councils as safeguards, for they all were expected to join the Presbytery. And, if they turned to the Cambridge Platform for guidance, they found that installation and ordination were expressly excluded from the essence of the pastorate, that the essential things constituting the pastorate as there given are a call and its acceptance. The great distance of church from church also operated to decrease installation. When the Plan of Union was abrogated in 1852, and ministers were no longer expected to join the Presbytery, what safeguard of purity was there left, since a growing number were not installed? It was then that safety was sought in "the invidious distinction" between "pastors" and "acting pastors." Had it been made much earlier than the abrogation of the Plan of Union, it would have appeared in the Congregational Dictionary of 1853. It does appear in the statistics in 1857, when even Massachusetts reported sixty "stated supplies." This distinction was made and used to strengthen the safeguard of installation, after the function of installing councils had been changed as above indicated.

c. The enforcement of installation by the pressure of fellowship. To prevent the continuance of acting pastors, the Boston Platform, 1865, declared: "A due respect to the communion of the churches requires that no man assuming to be a pastor of a church shall be acknowledged as such by other churches, unless, after his entrance on the duties of his office, he has been publicly recognized" by an installing council.*

According to this action a church may call a minister to its pastorate, and he may accept the call and enter upon

* Boston Platform, p. 51.

his work, but he cannot be recognized by other churches as pastor until he calls a council of churches to install him.

By this threefold change—turning the installing council from “assistance” into “advice,” then distinguishing between pastors installed and pastors acting, and finally refusing to recognize acting pastors as pastors at all in church fellowship—the safeguard of purity through installations has been carried to the outer limit of church independence. Indeed, some do not hesitate to call it “an usurpation” of church rights.

That we have given the true origin of the distinction between pastors and acting pastors is proved by the fact that no other churches of our order in the world have divided pastors into such or similar classes. The distinction is found only where the rejected union of church and state and the rejected pastoral theory of the ministry have left their trail.

5. *The difference between pastors and acting pastors.*

a. The difference does not lie in the call and its acceptance; for in either case formal calls are given and accepted. A call and its acceptance constitute, according to the Cambridge and Boston Platforms, “the essence and substance of the pastorate;” and where the essence and substance of a thing are, the thing itself is.

b. The difference is not one of permanency in office. Many acting pastors stay longer than pastors. Permanency depends more on character and ability than on installation.

c. The difference is not one of function. Both pastors and acting pastors perform the same official duties. They preach the word, administer the sacraments, marry the living, bury the dead, visit the people, and preside at all church meetings not relating to themselves.

d. The difference is solely one of induction into office. Pastors are installed by a council of churches; acting pastors are not installed. This distinguishes them, the one from the other.

e. There results from installation, in all states where special provisions do not guard against it, a legal relation between pastor and people, which requires a peculiar method of dissolving. The installed pastor in said states, performing duty, can collect his salary until his pastoral relation shall be dissolved (1) by death, or (2) by mutual consent, or (3) by a mutual council, or (4) by an *ex-parte* council, when a mutual council cannot be agreed upon by the parties.¹⁰ This legal relation came out of the union of church and state, and it is looked upon by many churches as of doubtful utility.

And yet ordination or installation has always been held to be an inauguration and not an essential of the pastorate. The essentials of the office are election and acceptance. Let us prove it. In 1637 a council of churches met at Concord, Mass., which resolved that "upon election they [the pastor and teacher] were ministers before they were solemnly ordained."¹¹ Two years later, in 1639, the ministers of the Bay Colony answered thirty-two questions sent them by their brethren in England. Their reply to the thirteenth question is: "The outward calling of a minister consisteth properly and essentially in election by the people. . . . The right [rite?] of imposition of hands is not absolutely necessary to the essence of a pastor, any more than coronation to the essence of a king."¹² Election and acceptance were made in 1648, and again in 1865, "the essence and substance" of the pastorate. Hence ordination or installation becomes, what they called it in the Platforms, the mere inauguration of a man into office whereunto he had right before by his election;" but it was seldom or never neglected.

6. *The difference between pastors and acting pastors is not*

¹⁰ Buck's Mass. Eccl. Law, 212.

¹¹ Felt's Eccl. History, i. 275.

¹² Felt's Eccl. History, i. 384.

¹³ Camb. Plat., ix. 2; Boston Plat., pt. ii. chap. v. 4; Cong. Dictionary, articles: "Calling of a Minister, in what does it consist?" "Ordination, none besides election indispensable;" Upham's Ratio Disciplinæ, § 69.

regarded, except in our statistics. After the action of the Boston Council, in 1865, a few attempts were made not to recognize acting pastors as pastors, but they soon ceased. The Brooklyn Council of 1874 enrolled five as acting pastors, but accorded them the same rights and privileges on the floor. The Brooklyn Council of 1876 had twenty-two acting pastors in it, not distinguished from pastors on the roll or on the floor. The Old South Council of Boston for the installation of Rev. Geo. A. Gordon, 1884, enrolled two acting pastors as pastors. And so did the Madison Avenue Congregational Church Council of New York, 1884, enroll two acting pastors as pastors. A council called by the Tower Hill Church, Lawrence, Mass., in November, 1884, to advise in regard to a difficulty, "to avoid any possible doubt as to the validity of the result," allowed two acting pastors in it, when the question was raised, to decline to vote. But these members were invited by vote of the council to assist by their advice in making up the result. Thus generally, East as well as West, no distinction is made in the roll or in the privileges of a council between pastors and acting pastors.

The distinction is also ignored in District and State Associations, and in their choice of delegates to the National Council, where pastors and acting pastors and non-pastors are enrolled without question. It is only the distinction as it appears in the statistics that requires committee after committee to ponder.

The distinction has no bearing upon church membership, since installation cannot make a minister a member of the church he serves or of any other body. The installed and the uninstalled pastor must transfer their church membership in precisely the same way, by letter. Nor can either a pastor or an acting pastor vote in church meetings, unless he be a member, except where a special rule of the church expressly grants to the pastor such privilege.

The distinction is not regarded in respect to presiding

over church meetings. The call to the office of pastor includes the right to preside at church meetings not pertaining to himself, and to discharge the duties of presiding officer. Upham, as early as 1844, said: "The practice of the churches permits him to act as moderator of the church *ex officio*; and that, too, whether he has become a member or not, because holding the pastoral office, he has the implied consent and approval of the brethren in the discharge of that duty."¹⁴ Has he, as moderator, the same implied consent and approval of breaking a tie vote, when not a member? Be this as it may, both pastors and acting pastors are alike in power to break a tie vote, whether as members of the church, or as empowered by custom or special rule of the church so to act.

There is no point where the distinction under consideration is observed except in our statistics, unless by a council now and then; and why should our *Year Books* differ from the English, the Canadian, the Australian, and all others, in this respect? Does security under our liberty require it?

7. *The distinction is neither a safe nor a sufficient guard of purity.*

Without installing councils the English Congregational churches, in the Arian apostasy, which swept nearly all the English Presbyterian churches—ninety-one per cent of them—into heresy, lost only from six to ten. In the Unitarian apostasy in this country, the churches of Connecticut under the Saybrook Platform stood firm, not losing one of their number. But the churches of Massachusetts, rejecting the frequent attempts to mend their rules of discipline, and clinging to the Cambridge Platform after its concluding chapter on the power of the magistrate in ecclesiastical censures had become obsolete, lost ninety-six churches, nearly twenty-seven per cent of the whole number, besides thirty parishes. They did not

¹⁴ Ratio Discip. § 85, (2).

seem to have a clear conception of the adjustment needed when both the theory of the ministry was changed and the church parted company with the state. At last, when compelled to protect themselves, we have seen how they changed the nature of installation and relied upon it. This had been well, had it been adequate and in consistency with our principle of independence. But, requiring a church to call a council of installation or have no recognized pastor, the change gave color to the charge that the fellowship of the churches has therein been perverted into "an usurpation." For, if a church has power to call a pastor, it has power to inaugurate him as pastor, that is, install him. The act of calling can be consummated by itself in installation, otherwise a church cannot manage all its own affairs. True, a church may ask for advice in determining the fitness of a man for its pastorate,—this is one thing; but to say to it, "You shall ask said advice or have no recognized pastor at all," is quite another thing. To choose and inaugurate its pastor belong to the essentials of an independent church. Nor does fellowship demand any surrender of this independence in the interests of purity, since that purity can be secured in a better way, as we shall soon see.

But, if installing councils were safe as regards liberty, they would not be sufficient for purity, to say nothing of their great cost in some of the States." After the most persistent advocacy of installation for years, only about one-third of the ministers in pastoral work are at the present time installed; and the number is absolutely less than in 1857, when the distinction was first published,

¹⁸ A council called to recognize a church was recently held at Little Rock, Arkansas, whose eleven members, to attend it, travelled 5,064 miles, or 460 miles apiece, almost twice as far as from Boston to New York. This is only an extreme case, indicating the cost in time and money of councils, when gathered from over the magnificent distances of the West and South. It suggests the question: "Is the outlay required by our polity?" Dakota is more than twice the size of New England, with about two hundred churches; how can they depend on councils for a safeguard?

while relatively the decrease has been rapid. In 1857 there were 216 reported as "unspecified;" supposing one-third of these were pastors and two-thirds were acting pastors, we have the following statement:

1857....	Pastors, 1,025;	Acting Pastors, 706;	Ministers, 2,350.
1870....	" 901;	" " 1,269;	" 3,097.
1885....	" 932;	" " 1,831;	" 3,889.

Even in New England pastors and acting pastors are nearly equal in numbers, while there are only 601 pastors among 1,595 ministers reported. Not one-half the ministers there are within the safeguard of installing councils.

It has been claimed that the membership of churches with pastors installed exceeds that of churches with pastors uninstalled. After a careful count we present the following figures as substantially correct:

Membership of churches in U. S. with pastors, 166,802.
" " " " acting pastors, 161,930—4,872.
" " out of N. E. with pastors, 59,732.
" " " " acting pastors, 104,873—45,141.
" " out of Mass. with pastors, 101,427.
" " " " acting pastors, 144,760—43,333.

We do not like this appeal to the membership of the churches, since our polity rests on the principle that one church of Christ is essentially equal to any other, that a smaller church can manage its own affairs as safely under Christ as a larger one. Hence all comparisons must be made between churches, and not between the lists of membership; and we have gone beyond churches to membership solely because a comparison of members was referred to in a report made to the National Council in 1883. On either comparison it must be evident that installation is not an adequate safeguard of purity in any part of the country. Nor can it be in the future, since this great decadence has followed the most urgent advocacy of installation.

8. *The normal safeguard of purity is in our polity.* This safeguard rests on the true, though common, theory of the ministry. The ministry is wider than the pastorate; hence

logically ministers are amenable as to standing, not to the churches they respectively serve, as was the case under the rejected pastoral theory, but to the wider association of churches in the vicinity. They are accountable as to ministerial standing to the neighboring churches, and that, too, in their associated capacity. Councils will not do, as they are selected according to the will of those calling them, and die on adjournment. Ministerial Associations are not the proper place for such standing, for therein ministers are amenable to themselves, and not to the churches, and a class rule results.

This wider standing and accountability may strike some as uncongregational, but it has been long recognized. In 1812 the New Haven West Association of Ministers in Connecticut favored by majority vote the affirmative of the question: "Is a minister, dismissed without recommendation, amenable to his former pastoral charge?"¹⁶ The question was modified into: "What is the standing of a dismissed minister?" and carried to the General Association, which referred it to a committee. The committee reported the next year, saying, among other things: "By ordination, the official commission of an evangelist is conferred." "The ministerial office not being affected by the dissolution of the *pastoral* connection, a dismissed minister can be no less amenable to the Association, subsequent, than previous, to his dismissal. The obligation of the Association to him, and his obligation to them, must be maintained as remaining unchanged."

This wider standing of ministers has acceptance as right and Congregational. With only one dissenting vote, the National Council declared, in 1880, "that the body of churches in any locality have the inalienable right of extending ministerial fellowship to, or withholding fellowship from, any person within their bounds, no matter what his relations may be in church membership or ecclesiastical affiliations, the proceedings to be commenced by any

¹⁶ Contrib. Eccl. Hist., 328.

¹⁷ 9 Cong. Quart., 194.

church, and to be conducted with due regard to equity.”¹⁸ This had reference to bringing unworthy men, claiming to be ministers, to accountability; but the inalienable right has the same relation to all ministers, and can be asserted by the churches in any locality through their Associations as properly as through special councils.

Indeed, church Conferences or Associations, which were first coming into existence at the time when the Unitarian controversy was raging most fiercely, now embrace all the Congregational churches of the nation, with possibly here and there an exception. And what is their bearing on ministerial standing? We propounded four questions to the proper officers, and from the replies we tabulate the facts as follows:—

IN NEW ENGLAND.

1.	Number of Ministerial Associations.....	81
2.	“ Church Conferences.....	75
3.	“ Consociations (in Conn.).....	4—160

IN THE REST OF THE COUNTRY.

1.	Number of Ministerial Associations.....	13
2.	“ Church Associations with ministerial membership in them.....	125
3.	“ Church Associations not having ministerial membership in them.....	2—140

If these answers are substantially correct,¹⁹—and we have no reason to doubt their substantial correctness,—there is a great difference between New England and the rest of the country, in these matters, that ought to be heeded. Ministerial standing in Connecticut is held in Ministerial Associations, as declared by vote of the General Association. In Vermont the civil courts hold that membership in a Ministerial Association is evidence among the churches

¹⁸ Minutes, 17.

¹⁹ The questions asked were: 1. What is the whole number of local Congregational Associations and Conferences in the State? 2. Ditto, Ministerial Associations? 3. Ditto, Church Associations or Conferences with *no* ministerial membership in them? 4. Ditto, same, with both church and ministerial membership in them?

and on conviction to administer the proper punishment.”⁹⁰ The covenant in the above case was unwritten. It is hardly to be believed that in Massachusetts the courts would hold that Ministerial Associations are mere clubs, in which membership is no evidence of ministerial standing. But whatever membership in Ministerial Associations may mean in New England, membership in Associations or Conferences out of New England—obtained as it is on credentials and by vote of the body receiving—means accountable standing. The member, whether church or minister, can be tried, expelled, dropped, or transferred to a co-ordinate body, as facts may warrant. And when dropped or expelled, that church or minister loses both standing and connection with our communion.

9. *This safeguard is not Presbyterian.* There is not a single element of Presbyterianism in it. Good order is not peculiar to the polity of Calvin, and our churches may have good order and not be Presbyterian. The Presbytery holds both the church membership and the ministerial standing of its presbyters. It has control over the local churches that are members of it, to review and correct their records, to issue cases of lay discipline that are appealed to it, to put ministers into their pulpits and to take them out of those pulpits, and to cut off offending ministers and churches.

Congregational Associations of churches and ministers have no authority over the records, discipline, pulpits, or property of the churches in connection; but they have the right of self-protection. They can cast out from membership, and so cut off from responsible standing in our denomination, any minister or church that has violated the covenant on which Congregational fellowship rests. To deny them this right of self-protection, is to put it into the power of a single minister or church to coerce all the rest, to force fellowship upon them. This absurdity is not an element of our polity. An Association

⁹⁰ *Shurtleff vs. Stevens*, 51 Vt., 501; 31 Am. Repts., 704.

of ministerial standing; that, "if it be suspected that a wolf in sheep's clothing has invaded their ranks, it is not only for the *interest* of all the members of the Association to know the fact, but it is their *imperative duty* to make inquiry and *ascertain* the fact;" and that, "under its covenant and rules, it had rightful jurisdiction to investigate charges of unministerial conduct affecting its members, of churches and ministers has, therefore, the right of self-protection, the power and duty of clearing itself of unfit members; and that, too, without becoming in the least degree Presbyterianized. It is "the inalienable right of the churches in any locality" to do this, and they can do it better in stated Associations than in occasional councils.

If an Association wrong either a church or a minister in its action, full relief can be found in a mutual council, one-half chosen by the aggrieved and one-half by the Association, or, if this be denied, in an *ex parte* council. If an Association itself lapse from the faith, the faithful in it can come out and form another, which can be recognized by the other churches, while the apostate Association can be cut off from fellowship. Thus all cases and conditions are covered, and church independence is conserved.

Here, then, is a safeguard covering all churches and ministers in connection, comprehensive, consistent, impartial, Congregational, insuring liberty to each church, while giving security to all. It does not give power to an irresponsible installing council of two or three churches to bind the fellowship of four thousand churches. It holds those who admit to fellowship accountable for those admitted. In view of which better safeguard the distinction between pastors and acting pastors may safely be removed from our statistics. But how shall this safeguard be exhibited in place of the present "p." and "a. p."?

10. *Ministerial designations.* It follows from the above that all distinctions between "pastors" and "acting pastors" should be dropped from our statistical tables; that all pastors serving churches should be enrolled without

designation, if they be in connection with Congregational Associations or Conferences within the State, and whose membership therein has been effected by vote on proper credentials; that all other ministers in pastoral work should be designated according to fact, as connected with some other Association, Conference, or denomination, as unconnected, or as expelled or dropped; and that all ministers in responsible connection within the State should be enrolled under tables of associational connection, and in an alphabetical list.

Such designations remove "the invidious distinction" complained of, and rest all distinctions on principle and fact. Then all who accept calls and serve churches are pastors, as in the days of the apostles, as in our two Platforms, and are designated according to fact. It will be easy for secretaries and registrars to make the needed certification for the Year Book of all ministers in connection, and the anomaly would no longer occur of recording in the Year Book as in good standing and connection the names of ministers who have been expelled from connection and fellowship by the churches of the vicinity, in the exercise of their inalienable right, or have withdrawn from fellowship. In such case each local body would hold itself responsible for all ministers and churches in connection whose names its proper officer officially reports, and for no others. Against this method no principle of our polity can be urged in justice, but only a recent custom which the churches by a large majority are neglecting.

This is the method, in substance, we believe, of all Congregational Unions and Associations outside the United States." At present, in the United States, the minutes of twenty-four State Associations, designate those in minis-

¹¹ We have examined Year Books covering the Congregational Unions of England and Wales, Scotland, Ireland, Ontario and Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, Victoria, New South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania, New Zealand, Natal, South Africa, Jamaica, and British Guiana. Not one of them has our "invidious distinction."

terial standing with greater or less clearness, two doubtfully, and four, among which are Utah and North Carolina, make no distinction. Our Year Book also records, with noted exceptions, the distinction between those in such associational connection and those not members of any district Association.

We have indicated a way of uniformity. All that is needed to complete it is to define more fully what ministerial standing is under the common and true doctrine of the ministry. This we have done in another place." A list of all such as are in connection by membership in some accountable Association could then be easily made for the Year Book. Even the New England States, with the exception of Maine, report all members of Ministerial Associations, but not of Congregational clubs. So in the other States, all members of Church Associations, whether churches or ministers, are generally reported in separate lists. There is not, then, much remaining to be done, to reach the needed uniformity and security.

The National Council has prepared the way for both. At its formation in 1871, the Council declared "that all ministers in our denomination ought to be in orderly connection with some ministerial or ecclesiastical organization which shall be able to certify to their regular standing in the ministry," and "that churches be urged not to employ, as preachers, unsettled ministers without such evidence of their good standing in the ministry." In 1880 it declared it to be "the inalienable right of churches in any locality to extend or to withhold ministerial fellowship." If it shall define ministerial standing to be such membership in district Associations as makes the Associations responsible for their members in the sense above given, and then enroll only such without a star (*) in the alphabetical list in the Year Book, the work is done. The States are nearly all in line with such action.

11. *There is urgent need of uniformity among our*

* Pocket Manual, §§ 80-5.

churches. The continuation of local and peculiar usages causes confusion; and hence we have written this paper in the interest of peace. We have shown that the New England way is not the Old England way, nor the way of her colonies, nor the way of the West. It is not the way of the Presbyterianizing Saybrook Platform. It is not the way of the Boston Platform, which, however, is not consistent with itself. Hence it is no wonder that there is a mixture of conflicting views, which engenders strifes. One cannot attend a council where grave questions are raised without seeing the confusion of opinion thus arising. Books are quoted and usages insisted on that rest on a rejected theory of the ministry or on the early union of church and state. Thus the attempt is made to put the new wine into the old wine-skins, as though there could be possibly no other or better way. Yet our churches are not going to reject the true and adequate theory of the ministry, and part company with all the other Congregational churches in the world, that they may practise customs born of errors. The only harmony that can be had in usages must come from the carrying out in logical consistency of the true theory of the ministry, in a free church, into accountable ministerial standing in Associations of churches. The church and the state have been separated. Installing councils fail to be safe and sufficient guards of purity. Why shall they not be made simply councils of recognition, while reliance is had for security on a safeguard which comes logically from the theory of the ministry now held, and which is both safe and adequate? This accountable ministerial, as well as church, standing, in Associations of churches, with appeal to mutual councils, is Congregational, and it has power to make us one. Shall we not hasten to build upon it an ecumenical unity?