

THE
BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

ARTICLE I.

VOLUNTARY SOCIETIES AND CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCHES.

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

It may be a misfortune, but it is nevertheless inevitable, that the benevolent and missionary work of the American Congregationalists should be slowed up a little for the purpose of mending the machinery. In consequence, in part, of an unfavorable environment, the New England churches of our order adopted theories and formed alliances which were out of harmony with their polity, and which have compelled adjustments from time to time as the mistakes have appeared. We can say this and yet credit them with the honor of founding free institutions, which have given liberty here and elsewhere to the world. But they were not perfect. Their theory of the ministry—resting it in the pastoral relation—had first to be given up. Then the union of church and state, permitting only members of Congregational churches to vote and hold office in the leading colonies, had after a generation to be surrendered. Immediately out of this union there emerged the parish system, which made a church a mere appendage of a secular society holding all the property, even to the communion service, and compelling the church to nominate a candidate to the parish

or society for it to elect as pastor. And what was worse, a church could not exist without a parish or ecclesiastical society other than itself to which it was attached.¹ This unnatural connection, born of the union of church and state, has continued to the present time, and has been extended with Congregationalism, as an integral part of it, to all the regions beyond the Hudson. But now it is said: "An unmistakable drift toward the incorporation of churches is manifest not only in this commonwealth [Mass.], but throughout the country."² This parish system is not found among Congregational churches in any other country; it is largely discarded by the Western Congregational churches. So, too, the system of councils, born of the union of church and state in New England, is slowly giving way before the better system of accountability of church and minister in associations of churches.

When, therefore, "voluntary societies" are defended as "the Congregational way," no one acquainted with the facts will regard the appeal as conclusive. For while such societies are historically Congregational in America, they may not be normally Congregational. They may be an abnormal growth of Congregationalism, due to environment. The last National Council, the representative body of all American Congregationalists, seems to have regarded them as such, for without a dissentient vote it declared its "opinion in favor of steps which in due time will make the said societies the representatives of the churches."³

But the friends of the voluntary and the close corporations, which claim to be agents of the churches, call upon

say that mission and benevolent labor through such societies is "the Congregational way;" that "whenever the theory shall become ascendant that all our missionary and benevolent work is to be done church-wise, under ecclesiastical control and sanction, the way will be prepared for the whole body of Congregationalists to abandon their independent position, and, blending with the Presbyterian Church, diminish by one the number of separate denominations." For the argument for the change is "sound Presbyterian doctrine."¹ To one thoroughly acquainted with the two polities these statements seem unaccountable. For Presbyterianism is neither in the changes proposed nor deducible from them.

Our contention is that voluntary societies, and close, self-perpetuating corporations especially, are indirect outgrowths of the early union of church and state in New England, and are antagonistic to the constitutive principle of Congregationalism. As that principle is putting away other abnormal developments, so it will put away these societies or bring them into representative relations with the churches that support them. The agents must become accountable to the churches as to a principal.

As it now is, our foreign missionary society and two others are close, self-perpetuating corporations, receiving and disbursing about one-quarter of our contributions. The churches that contribute these sums have absolutely neither voice nor vote in the management of these societies. Bishops are made accountable in their respective communions; these societies, and others largely, are unaccountable, in any direct way. The contributing churches can reach them only indirectly, by resolutions, the press, exclusions from churches and associations, withholding contributions. If they stop

contributions, a cry of distress is immediately raised—debt at home, starvation abroad. To send missionaries out into heathen lands through an agent, the Board, and then cut off their supplies in order to reach that agent and make it feel accountable, may be “the Congregational way,” but it is as cruel as it is absurd. A church that voted to do it was rebuked by our papers. What then? Why, this: If our churches continue to contribute, is not that fact to be proclaimed as proof of approval? If they refuse to contribute, are they not to be reprobated for deserting missionaries in the foreign field? No other churches were ever so helpless in a bondage of their own making. Increased funds are greatly needed for the work, they have been urged and voted by the Board; but increased funds may be used to prevent any change in the constitutions of these societies.

Relief from this awkward position is needed and must be had. Attention was called to it in 1872. The Presbyterians had withdrawn from the Board. The question had been raised as to the relations of voluntary societies in a report made by a committee of the General Association of Connecticut in that year and printed. The Board, released as a union board, was asked by the Prudential Committee in 1875, to consider a desirable remedy. The Board referred it to a large committee, which, unfortunately, in 1876, reported adversely. Had the representative plan then suggested been adopted, the peace and prosperity of the Board would have been enhanced, and the contest which began ten years later at Des Moines avoided. One thing needs to be remembered in this agitation over the societies, that the movement for representative adjustment was begun at least fourteen years before the meeting of the Board at Des Moines, and it cannot therefore be credited to Andover. It had its birth in Connecticut and Ohio. Undoubtedly the action at Des Moines emphasized the need of some change. The proposal of councils “in difficult cases” was rightly

rejected at Springfield. But steps should then have been taken to ascertain the will of the churches, but were not. Hence that action raises, as Dr. Gilman says, the "question how much deference is to be shown to the will of the churches. . . . Whether the [corporate] members, when elected, are to give currency to their own views of doctrine, or to act as the agents of the churches. . . . No attempt was made to learn whether the decision would satisfy the constituency for which the Board was acting." It can hardly be questioned that in this matter, at least, the Board behaved more as the principal than as an agent. Its course assumed ecclesiastical power. Hence its President, Mark Hopkins, characterized its Prudential Committee as "a theological committee." The Board in supporting that committee without reference to the supporting churches assumed to determine for itself the orthodoxy of its missionaries. It did not try to ascertain the will of the churches, but assumed to know it. No doubt this usurpation of authority has intensified the demand for a representative connection of all the societies with the churches, and rendered the action of the last National Council in reference thereto possible. If there existed such connection, then the action of the societies would be the action of the churches through their chosen representatives. Their present relation is a strange anomaly among independent churches.

But it is claimed that "this is the Congregational way." No; the claim is too broad. The Congregational societies of England, Australia, and Canada, home and foreign, have never, we believe, been close corporations or voluntary societies. The same is probably true of the Baptist societies, and the Baptists are good Congregationalists in polity. Nor is it true even of American Congregationalists, for a majority of their societies are not close corporations,¹ and sixty

¹CLASSIFICATION OF SAID SOCIETIES.

1—Societies with no representation from the churches or associations of

per cent of their contributions to the seven societies goes to this majority, and seventy-five per cent of all their benevolent contributions is given through other channels than close corporations.

Nor are all these societies, which are either partially or wholly representative, of recent origin. The London Missionary Society is fifteen years older than the American Board. Indeed, the American Board was not organized as a close, self-perpetuating corporation, or as a voluntary society, but as a representative board of missions, easily comprehending all states in the Union whose Congregational churches should contribute to its treasury. All that is now asked, is found essentially in its original constitution. Had not that constitution been perverted, the American Board would have been managed from the beginning of its grand churches, with no voting membership secured by the payment of money, but close, self-perpetuating corporations:—

A. B. C. F. M. Members, 230.

A. C. & E. S. Members, 150.

N. W. E. C. Members, 26.

2—Societies with no representation from churches or associations of churches, but whose voting membership is secured by the payment of money:

A. C. U. Members, 2,000.

C. S. S. & P. S. Members, 500 to 600.

3—Society whose voting membership is composed partly of delegates from State Home Missionary Societies, whether auxiliary or not—which societies may be, and in some cases are, composed of churches or their delegates—but chiefly of Life Members made such by the payment of money:—

A. H. M. S. Members, about 25,000.

4—Society whose voting membership is made up of annual delegates from contributing churches and from State Associations of churches, but chiefly of Life Members made such by the payment of money:—

A. M. A. Life Members, 15,712.

We have examined the constitutions of English, Australian, Canadian, American, Congregational, and Baptist societies with this result:—

Societies examined. 14.

Close corporations. 3.

Membership on money basis. 2.

Representative of churches in whole or in part. 9.

history by the representatives of the churches elected by the general associations of the states, just as its model, the London Missionary Society, has been controlled by a board of directors chosen by county unions. But the American Board was soon perverted into a close corporation. Why?

We must remember that the people of Massachusetts were brought up under the parish system; that under that system the churches as such had no legal existence apart from an ecclesiastical society or parish; that "churches cannot exercise any control over property which they may have held in trust for the society with which they have been formerly connected;" that, "as to all civil purposes, the secession of a whole church from a parish would be an extinction of the church;"¹ and that churches as such could not consequently carry on missions or do anything else. When, therefore, a board, elected by the ministers of such helpless appendages of parishes as the churches were, applied for a charter to receive, hold, and disburse funds in foreign missions, what petition could have been more preposterous to the members of the Great and General Court? They could not grasp the idea that churches as such, without any outside body to give them legal entity, could do anything of themselves, and how could their ministers conduct missions? So entrenched is this subordination of churches in the whole fabric of New England Congregationalism, and even thought, that the states of Massachusetts and Connecticut have refused until recently, if not still, to pass laws permitting the incorporation of Congregational churches, and multitudes of the best men in New England still distrust or deny the ability of churches to manage their own affairs. No wonder the charter came out, in 1812, from the General Court, a close, self-perpetuating corporation. In spite of the English example in support of the original constitution, the adverse environment smothered the representative method of conducting foreign missions almost at its birth.

¹ The celebrated Dedham decision of the Supreme Court, 16 Mass., 503 seq.

To this must be added the influence of the Plan of Union, which was entered into, in 1801, between Congregationalists and Presbyterians for conducting home missions. So one-sided are the controlling elements in this Plan, that the leading Presbyterians could not have failed to see that the unorganized Congregational churches would be absorbed by it into Presbyterianism. When, therefore, the American Board suggested to the General Assembly the propriety of forming a Presbyterian board for conducting foreign missions, it received in reply, that, in view of the urgency of the home missionary work, one society might properly best manage "the business of foreign missions." With this reply before them, wooing to union, "the Board was led to extend its membership into the Presbyterian Church."¹ This occurred in 1812, just before the granting of the charter. And so our Congregational representative American Board, after nearly two years, emerged as a close, self-perpetuating corporation and as a union society.

But in defence of this Board a red flag is now hung out, warning us against the original representative constitution of the Board, a return to which, we are told, would be the transformation of Congregationalism into Presbyterianism, the extinction of a denomination.² Is it not strange, then, that the London Missionary Society, which has had similar representation for ninety-five years, has not perverted English Congregationalism? Representation has not turned the Baptists into Presbyterians. It has not made our American churches Presbyterian, though they have representative bod-

missionary work by the churches, through chosen representatives, is precisely the same exercise of authority over churches as that which is employed in sessions, presbyteries, synods, and assemblies; but the former is the control of an agent by the principal in the doing of certain work, while the latter is the government of churches by so-called ecclesiastical courts. In the former, polity is not involved, for Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and some Congregationalists control directly their missionary work; in the latter, polity is the thing specified. The bare statement of the case refutes the objection. To control agents is one thing, to govern churches is quite another. But, it is said, the control of missions will end in the government of churches. That is a dream not made real by the facts. There is no such drift manifested in England or among the Baptists. Our liberty is not endangered here. There is a radical difference between controlling agents in doing a common work, and the establishment of ecclesiastical courts. To confound the two is inexcusable. Hence the charge is untrue, that "the theory underlying the proposed change is in conflict with the fundamental ideas of Congregationalism."¹ We affirm the very opposite, that representation in controlling missionary and benevolent work is in exact harmony with our principles, a logical outgrowth from them; while close corporations and voluntary societies are contrary thereto.

Again, it is said that "no desire has been expressed by those most directly concerned in administering the affairs of the societies" for such a change in the organic law "that these societies shall in form and in fact consist of representatives chosen directly or indirectly by the churches." They are "presumably best fitted to judge of the working of the present methods."² In reply we would say, that reformers, whether in theology, polity, religion, temperance, civil-ser-

¹ Dr. Gilman in the *Religious Herald*, June 26, 1890.

² *Ibid.*

vice, or anything else, have not been accustomed to wait for those in power to express a desire for reform, before they begin. Did the Anglican bishops, seeing the evils of their despotic administration, ask for the Puritan reformation? Did the papal hierarchy call for Luther and Calvin? Did the Congregational churches of Massachusetts and Connecticut see the evils of the union of church and state, and call for disestablishment? Do office-holders long for civil-service reform? And kings for republics? Somehow reforms have never come in the way suggested, and to be referred to those in power to suggest first of all a curtailment of that power, bewilders us. The millennium is not quite so near at hand as this proposal indicates. Men like power. Good men like power. They are wont to think that they can use power most wisely and safely. We cannot reasonably expect therefore that "those most directly concerned in administering the affairs of the societies" will express a desire for a change when one is needed. Instead, we may expect that they will defend the present order of things, as some of them have done.

Yet when controversy arises among the churches, whether of theology or of administration, is it quite the thing for the societies, which claim to be, and ought to be, the agents of those churches, to take sides, and so become "make-weights" in the contention? Can their officers champion any party in the strife without impairment of their trust? Are they not the officers of the societies, and of all parties in controversy therein? Can they, then, become the champions of any wing or faction, without damage to the society? These questions answer themselves. They suggest, also, that in one society, at least, the idea of agent and service has given

position of agent, doing the work of all the churches, and leave the contestants to defend their own positions.

But our definitions of a church are said to cut off the possibility of conducting missions through representatives chosen by the churches. "These definitions have been repeated and emphasized in cases innumerable during the last forty years."¹ Then, if these definitions are correct and complete, the case is closed. The Cambridge Platform, framed and approved under the union of church and state in Massachusetts, can hardly be expected to give a complete definition of a local church; for then the town did all the secular work of a church. And when the town developed into the parish system, the parish transacted all the pecuniary matters properly belonging to a church. A church could not exist without a parish. Hence that Platform defines the object of a church to be "the public worship of God, and the mutual edification one of another, in the fellowship of the Lord Jesus." The Boston Platform, 1865, included in its definition a "mutual agreement to observe Christ's ordinances;" and makes the benefits of church membership to be in part "the increased activity and enjoyment in the Christian life of combining the affections and endeavors of believers, and by inciting each other to love and good works."² There is nothing in the narrowest definition of a church framed under the influence of the parish system, that hinders, much less forbids, our churches carrying on and controlling the work of missions. They may combine in general associations; these associations may become incorporated, as several now are; they may, as corporate representatives of the churches, conduct missions, Sunday-schools, ministerial relief, or anything else belonging to churches; or they may elect representatives to national boards, which shall, as agents, do any or all of these things. There is

¹ Relations, etc. (reprint), pp. 6, 7.

² Boston Plat., Part II. chap. i. p. 6.

nothing in the definition of a local church to forbid such things. Why, the parish system itself is not included in these definitions; yet it has come down to us as a part of American Congregationalism. Evangelization, though not mentioned expressly, is not thereby excluded. If it is, then our churches, as such, are forbidden by the terms in which they are defined to preach missions, take up collections for missions, hold missionary concerts, or do anything for them. But evangelization is included in the wider meaning of the terms "ordinances" and "endeavors of believers."

But it has been claimed that there is no scriptural warrant for the proposed change. Is there any for close corporations and voluntary societies? Was the command to evangelize the world given to such bodies? But, it is said, the method was left optional. Very well, then church boards have as good warrant as any society. We make our rule of faith and practice the Bible, and hence we ought to follow its faintest clews, if certain. If we do this, we shall not exalt the constitutions of our present societies, which were born not of the New Testament, but of the union of church and state, which is forbidden most emphatically by the New Testament. But does not the New Testament strongly indicate that evangelization belongs to churches as their peculiar and prescribed work?

Jesus Christ, when about to ascend, gave his commission to "make disciples of all the nations," not to the apostles alone, but to the five hundred and more that met him on a mountain in Galilee. They constituted the "little flock," to whom was given the kingdom; they were the church of God, winnowed from an apostate people; they were the "as many as received him," to whom was given "the right to become the children of God;" they afterwards became the church at Jerusalem, the mother church of Christendom. They were the remnant of true believers, who connected the old with the new and perfect dispensation. In them Christ

addressed his true church and enjoined the evangelization of all the nations. They were endued on the day of Pentecost, and recognized as the church; for all who joined them then and afterwards had to be baptized. After about three years there arose "a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad except the apostles." "They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word." The church thus began home evangelization. The apostles, in the exercise of their functions, sent Peter and John to examine and confirm the work, when they returned to Jerusalem, preaching as they returned. Some of the church "scattered abroad travelled as far as Phœnicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to none save only to Jews." "A great number believed." Whereupon "the church which was in Jerusalem" sent Barnabas to Antioch, where he, the representative of the mother church, labored "for a whole year," going to Tarsus to fetch Paul to help him. A church was gathered there, which sent "relief unto the brethren that dwelt in Judæa . . . sending it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul"—the new church thus aiding the mother church through chosen messengers.

About twelve years after Christ's ascension, foreign missions were begun in this wise: While the religious services were going on in the church at Antioch, the Spirit said unto the church: "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." By this act the church set Barnabas and Saul apart for their mission. It was a church act. When they returned from this first foreign missionary tour, they "gathered the church together," and "rehearsed all things that God had done with them, and how that he had opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles." Not individuals in the

church, not the apostles, but the church is honored in this first attempt to evangelize the nations.

This same church afterwards "appointed that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders," to settle a contention disturbing the church. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth: "Whomsoever ye shall appoint by letters, them will I send to carry your bounty unto Jerusalem." "Messengers of the churches" were "appointed by the churches to travel with" Paul and Titus with the collection. The church at Philippi sent its minister as a "messenger" to Paul in prison. Churches also gave letters of commendation.

In all these cases churches were honored. They did what was required. Individuals were not made the vehicle of power. When the churches could not go as a body, they chose delegates to act for them. Not the individual, but the local church, is the unit of power. And in this fact we lodge our claim that churches and not individuals should be the units of modern charitable and missionary work. Is it a wide claim on a narrow foundation? Then we fortify it by the fundamental principles of our polity, and the experience of all other Congregational churches. Certainly these hints respecting church action and representation favor a change in our societies, which in their present form can find nothing in the New Testament to support them. Christ laid evangelization upon the churches; and what he has laid upon them, they are able to do without damage to the true polity.

But if churches have authority in thus doing their common work, where shall the exercise of authority stop? Will not the church boards in time control the churches, and the

sentative boards and ecclesiastical bodies. The latter in our polity, as councils, conferences, associations, give advice, extend fellowship, and, in some instances, manage missionary and benevolent work ; but church boards are agents of the churches in doing their common work. A few men, elected for a term of years, distributed proportionately, will meet, choose officers, hear reports, adopt policies, conduct missions, as the American Board now does. If contentions over doctrine or method arise, the churches will be represented in the boards to settle them, as it is their right to do, and through the representatives appeal will be had, if necessary, to the churches. Our English churches which have done these things for almost a century have found no destroying angel therein. Our churches will find none. Supposing we had one foreign missionary society, and one home missionary society into which all our domestic societies should be gathered without loss of identity or charter rights, one meeting in the spring and the other in the autumn, each with a body of about three hundred corporate members or less, chosen representatives of the churches, elected in our general associations in rotation for a term of years, is it probable that these six hundred would ever come to lord it over our five thousand churches? The danger is too small and remote for fear.

Nor will the credit of the societies be impaired. This credit rests not on capital, but on good-will. Anything that deepens and widens this good-will, will confirm the credit of the societies. Surely an adjustment which makes missions and benevolence the work, not of societies, but of the churches ; which compels secretaries and agents to say in all associations, not: "We report to you what our society is doing in evangelizing the world," but, instead: "We report to you what you are doing," will increase contributions and credit. For direct responsibility is more productive than in-

direct. Other Congregational churches control their societies and find no impairment of credit therein.

But perhaps the most extraordinary argument in defence of the close, self-perpetuating board is this: "The right of debate is vastly more important than that of voting, and that right has never been restricted in the meetings of the Board." "A hotel cannot be successfully operated by a town-meeting."¹ Churches by the payment of money can make their pastors or any desired layman "honorary members," who may thus enjoy this "vastly more important right." If speaking is so superior to voting, we are at a loss to account for the solicitude over the result of the vote after debate, both at Springfield and New York. The disfranchised peoples of the world have been and are still groaning for the ballot; why not tell them of the vastly more important right of debate? Why may not the Negro problem in the Southern States be solved by giving full liberty of debate while denying the colored man the ballot? The campaign is vastly more important than the election, on this theory; why not then extend the campaign a little that everybody may speak who wishes, and confine the voting to the whites, or to the rich, or to the politicians? While in the debate some cry one thing and some another, all relieving their minds, the few can do the voting better than the many. This is the argument of aristocracies against the people, but we are surprised that our American Board should be defended with it. Everybody knows that speeches are little, that debates are often nothing, in Congress and elsewhere; but votes tell. It is the vote that men want. It settles matters of election and policy and party. Power lies in the vote, not in the debate. Surely the churches are not to be deceived with the "vastly more important right of debate" out of their democratic right to manage all of their affairs by vote: especially since all our leading papers

¹ *Relations, etc.* (reprint), pp. 12, 13.

and all our quarterlies and monthlies are owned and run by corporations or individuals that may close debate through them at any time; and since the platform of the Board is open to debate but a few hours once a year. It is the right to vote that is demanded, and that must be granted. Debate is often wearisome.

The question of representation in the societies that appeal to our churches for support is up, and it must be settled. The unanimous vote of the last National Council favoring it indicates more than "a certain degree of unrest."¹ Any society that treats the matter with indifference, as a passing discontent, will make a sad mistake. Some of our societies have already felt the "wind of the spirit," and, yielding to it, have begun to lay aside the elements which an unfavorable environment put into their organizations. They show a becoming willingness to come into close and normal relations with the churches that support them. Only three of the seven societies are close, self-perpetuating corporations, and they receive and disburse only one-fourth our contributions, and only forty per cent of the amount received by the seven societies. The largest of the three claims to be undenominational, and its Prudential Committee, at Springfield, went so far as to say that for it to be anything else would be "a virtual breach of trust." But the Board wisely refrained from endorsing such an utterance. The Presbyterians, the last to withdraw from the Board, left it in 1870, taking some of its missions as a rightful division of union efforts. Then it was that the Board publicly and expressly turned to the Congregational churches for support. Since that time its addresses and appeals have been made to Congregational bodies and churches. It has been enrolled as a Congregational Society in the Minutes of our National Council since the organization of this, in 1871, and has been represented in every session of the body except one. While

¹ Relations, etc. (reprint), p. 11.

doing such things, it cannot rightly claim to be undenominational. The income from other than Congregational churches, we have been unable to ascertain. As we gave through the Plan of Union over two thousand churches, in origin Congregational, to the Presbyterians, and are still giving them laymen and ministers; and as some Congregational churches are connected still with Presbytery, it is no wonder that some among these should remember with gifts the American Board.

But let us examine more carefully the action taken in 1871. The Home Secretary read a paper on behalf of the Prudential Committee, the year after the formal withdrawal of the Presbyterians, which was approved by the Board, ordered printed and circulated in special forms. This paper contained these words:—

“But a part of our constituency has also left us. While many of our Presbyterian friends have kindly assured us of their purpose to aid us hereafter, the number of such must regularly decrease; and in like manner the legacies from this quarter must become less and less. Hence, assuming that our disbursements are to continue undiminished, we shall need larger contributions from our Congregational churches.”

He then goes into an elaborate argument to show why the Congregational churches should make the needed larger gifts, saying:—

“These churches owe such an endeavor (1) to the memory of their founders, . . . (2) to their own missionary history, . . . (3) to their polity, . . . (4) to their denominational necessities, . . . (5) to Him who has made them what they are. . . . Such, then, is the duty of the Congregational churches.”

These heads are drawn out at length. Then it is argued “that it be considered the duty of every church to secure, if possible, a yearly offering from all its communicants.”

For which there was needed "some simple machinery," "(1) in every congregation," and "(2) in our conferences and associations." He did not appeal to donors, but to the Congregational churches as such, as the then and future constituency of the Board. The Board by approving that paper placed itself in line with the Congregational churches as their foreign missionary society. And in the light of this official utterance, the Board has been rightly understood and enrolled as Congregational, because "its constituency and control are substantially Congregational." If in the emergency of a contention the officers still hold it to be undenominational, they should proclaim it such in reports, addresses, appeals, lest it obtain money under false pretences. It would be interesting to ascertain, if we might, what income, if any, the Board receives from other than Congregational sources, that is, Congregational churches, and Congregationalists in Presbyterian and other communions.

We affirm our belief that the change indicated in the unanimous vote of the National Council is inevitable. Benevolent and mission work belong to churches as such. It is a common work, to be managed by representatives. Voluntary and close corporations make individuals, and not churches, the units and organs of power, and are repugnant therefore to the constitutive principle of our polity. Other abnormal things have been or are being put away as this principle asserts its controlling power. Our societies will be put away; or remodelled after those of other Congregationalists. This is sure to come. Delay may be occasioned by opposition, but the more quietly and quickly the true adjustment is made, the better. The General Association of Connecticut, in 1759, declared "that what affects all ought to be managed by all." Our churches are independent. They have power to manage all their individual affairs without dictation or hindrance from any. They have power also to manage all their common affairs through representation.

It is their business to evangelize the world. They can do it and through agents chosen by themselves. There is no Presbyterianism in this, no danger to liberty, for it has been tested for a century. A speedy and complete adjustment of our societies to our principles can be effected without loss to charter rights. Let not the agitation, then, be prolonged. ●

Our societies came into being in an adverse environment to meet specific wants. Their relations one to another, and their boundaries consequently, were never duly considered and adjusted. Generally they began as union societies; but, as every cent given through union channels turns up of necessity in denominational churches, the union societies were soon left by others in our hands. The time has come, it is believed, for adjusting boundaries and relations. It has been said that "the next trial of Congregationalism will be to prove whether or not it is strong enough to guide its missionary organizations to such relations and labors as will commend them to the approval of the Christian business world. The seven societies are the bond which united the Congregational church [churches]; but they are not its rudder."¹

The last National Council revealed the fact that the Congregational churches recognize this duty, and purpose to do it. They will guide and control the societies.

¹ Rev. Dr. Dunning in the *Congregationalist*, July 11, 1889.