

Supplementary Readings

To be used with *The Shaping of American Congregationalism*

Readings in the History and Polity of the National
Association of Congregational Christian Churches

Readings in the History and Polity of the National Association of
Congregational Christian Churches

Supplementary Readings

To be used with *The Shaping of American Congregationalism*

Rev. Dr. Arlin T. Larson, editor

PREFACE

Learning about the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches is not easy. No comprehensive history has been written. Only a few of the founders remain active. No seminary offers a course tailored to it. Months or years of participation, informal contacts, and overhearing the scuttlebutt are usually required. The "Congregational History and Polity" course is designed to accelerate the learning curve by immersing the student in modern Congregationalism's traditions and practices, as well as in the more comprehensive Congregational story.

We see this as essential for seminarians seeking a firm foundation in the community they are preparing to serve. Equally important is educating the many ministers who come to Congregationalism from other traditions. Church members seeking a better understanding of their faith may also appreciate a package that brings widely scattered materials together.

The first volume, for instance, *of Readings in the History and Polity of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches* collects Congregational reflections of the nature of the church(es) as recorded in the *Congregationalist* magazine. The articles collected are neither comprehensive nor definitive; we are not even certain to what extent they are representative. What can, however, be said is that the authors are men and women active in the Association whose views the magazine's editors deemed worthy of distribution.

At the very least the readings collected inform the reader of the parameters of discussion within the NACCC. They will additionally provide an introduction to leaders of the Congregational way and hopefully some insight into this movement's peculiar contribution to the Body of Christ.

This project is in its early stages. We would appreciate your suggestions and notice of our errors and omissions.

Rev. Dr. Arlin T. Larson, editor

CONTENTS

PREFACE
INTRODUCTION
READINGS

To accompany
Von Rohr,
Chapter

- Johnson, Edward. 1654. "Wonder-Working Providence of Sion's Savior." Catches the faith and vision underlying the Puritan migration to America. 2
- Winthrop, John. 1630. "A Model of Christian Charity." A lay sermon by the leader of the Boston Congregationalists outlining the vision behind their society.
- Mather, Cotton. 1710. "Essays to do Good." Mather commends piety and good works above doctrinal conformity. 3
- Wise, Jonathon. 1717. "Vindication of the Government of the New England Churches." Defends Congregational piety with the "light of Reason."
- Edwards, Jonathon. 1741. "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." Famous sermon of the First Great Awakening. 4
- Chauncy, Charles. 1743. "Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New England." Criticism of the manipulative and emotion-laden techniques of the revivalists.
- Hopkins, Samuel. 1776. "Dialogue Concerning the Slavery of the Africans." Most influential tract of the Christian abolitionists.
- Channing, William Ellery. 1819. "Unitarian Christianity." Ordination sermon and manifesto of liberal Congregationalism 5
- Finney, Charles Grandison. _____. "Autobiography." Leading figure of the Second Great Awakening.
- Bushnell, Horace. 1861. "Christian Nurture." Still influential statement of the principals of religious education. A protest against the evangelistic emphasis on conversion.
- Herring, Hubert. 1914. "The Place of Congregationalism in Recent History." A remarkably optimistic assessment of Congregationalism's accomplishments and prospects. 6
- Gladden, Washington. 1892. "Who Wrote the Bible?" Congregationalists embrace evolution and historical criticism.
- Gladden, Washington. 1907. "The Church & the Social Crisis." Important exposition of the Social Gospel.
- Strong, Josiah. "Our Country." 1885. Manifesto of urban reform with emphasis on the idea of Manifest Destiny.
- Basis of Union. 1949. The rationale and understandings presented to Congregational churches for the proposed United Church of Christ. 7
- Pauck, William. 1931. "Karl Barth: Prophet of a New Christianity." Interprets neo-orthodoxy from a Congregational point of view. Barthian notions of Church become influential in merger debate.
- Committee on Free Church Polity and Unity. 1954. "Report of a Study by the Committee on Free Church Polity and Unity." Study of Congregational practices by representatives of both sides of the merger debate.

INTRODUCTION

Though of paramount importance to the sixteenth century founders of Congregationalism, and to the twentieth century founders of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches, polity concerns have never constituted the sole focus of Congregationalism. Congregationalists have been deeply involved in the full range of American intellectual, cultural, social, and political life. The Supplementary Readings will engage you in this wider scope of concerns. Most are excerpted from longer works, hoping to give the flavor of the authors' style and letting them define the issues in their own terms. Perhaps you will want to follow up with the complete version of some. The Congregational Library in Boston is available to help you find documents that are no longer in print.

These authors expressed concerns and views in ways considered exemplary or definitive by their contemporaries. It behooves us to pay attention. To understand earlier sections of the path we are now on. To gain insight into contemporary situations. Perhaps even to be wakened to issues and modes of understanding to which our ancestors were better attuned than we. Are certain actual events the will and action of God & others not? When, for example, Edward Johnson marvels at the "Wonder-working Providence of Zion's Savior," which he sees at work in the Puritan migration, it makes our contemporary sense of God's working seems vague & indefinite. As mainline Protestantism is challenged by Pentecostalism and evangelicalism, the early Congregationalists' focus on conversion and church membership again becomes relevant. Urbanism, multiculturalism, immigration? We have still not resolved the issues attended to by Josiah Strong and Washington Gladden.

Some works may feel vaguely alien, even objectionable, from a twentieth century perspective. It could be literary style. The use of "f" for "s" and "v" for "u" (and vice versa), the "thee's" and "thou's" of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Or it may be more substantive. Jonathon Edward's "angry God." William Ellery Channing's debunking of traditional doctrines. Josiah Strong's celebration of (and challenge to) the "Anglo-Saxon" race. The point, however, is not so much to judge as to understand the depth and scope of Congregational faith, and to appreciate its enormous creativity. Hopefully to let our minds be expanded by our forebearers and join the dialogue with them in contemporary circumstances.

The Place of Congregationalism in Recent History

BY
HUBERT C. HERRING



THE PILGRIM PRESS
BOSTON CHICAGO

COPYRIGHT 1914
BY LUTHER H. GARY

THE PILGRIM PRESS
BOSTON

THE PLACE OF CONGREGATIONALISM IN RECENT HISTORY

It is confessedly difficult to estimate justly the meaning of events near at hand. None the less, both individuals and institutions must continually make the effort to do so. These pages attempt to analyze and appraise the major features of the history of the Protestant churches of the United States during the last fifty years, and to indicate what service has been rendered by the Congregational fellowship in these movements. The period chosen constitutes a natural unit, since it covers the enormous development of the nation in numbers, wealth and every form of activity which began after the close of the Civil War. This development has been quite as marked in the life of the church as elsewhere. The past fifty years have brought her unprecedented experiences.

The discussion is frankly optimistic. The writer is not aware of any primary feature of the movement of church history during

[5]

Congregationalism

this half-century which is to be regretted. Regret indeed must be felt for defective vision and lukewarm service, as in every age. But all the major characteristic and outstanding marks of the era count for progress. What is true of the whole is true of the denomination whose specific contribution is discussed. As compared to its own prior record or the record of sister denominations it has had a half-century of steady and honorable achievement. Its defeats have been in minor things, its victories in things of chief concern. Particularly has it been true that it has perceived the demand of the time and sought to meet it.

(1) The period in hand has been one of the drawing together of Protestant bodies. There has not been much of organic union. Of quickened sympathy and co-operative contact there has been immeasurable increase. It was high time. The close of the Civil War probably marked the climax of sectarian division. To the scores of sects centering around differences of doctrine, polity, ceremonial tradition, history, race and personality were added the denomina-

[6]

in Recent History

tions created by sectional strife. Nor had there as yet come any considerable softening of sectarian asperities. The Reformation had effectively destroyed the Roman unity which spelled corruption. But it appeared to have introduced the disunity which spells anarchy. Today there is no such appearance. Barriers have fallen down, intervening spaces have narrowed, mutual respect has grown, competition has been diminished, the sense of oneness has become habitual, members and ministers easily cross and recross denominational lines. The ecclesiastical climate has changed. The temperature is by no means uniform nor the air always balmy. But it is a long remove from the chill suspicion and controversial strain of former days.

More than this, there have grown to strength great agencies of service which, though entirely undenominational in form, are completely interdenominational in fact. The Y. M. C. A., the Y. W. C. A. and the American Bible Society, not to speak of a host of reformatory and philanthropic organizations, are as thoroughly organs of the

[7]

Congregationalism

church as though they bore its name. In advance of the name the thing itself has come. At certain points Protestantism is reunited.

But the process has gone still further. Thirty denominations with 17,000,000 members have created the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. It is a voice to speak their common message upon matters where such message is now possible; it is their hand to do certain tasks which can best be done together; it is their forum where they meet in conference and prayer. Few are aware of the range of the Council's work. Only since 1908 has it been a factor in the church's life. Necessarily, it is quietly feeling its way. But already in the fields of evangelism, industrial justice, international peace, social relationships and religious education it has made the massed influence of Protestantism felt. The path opens plainly before it. The churches have created an agency whose possibilities are far-reaching.

These results have not come about by accident. They are the product of specific

[8]

in Recent History

forces. Among them has been the temper of the times. Men will not remain apart religiously when they are getting together in all other relations of life. But in the main it has been a matter of leadership and of a leadership not so much individual as corporate. Several denominations have had a share. One has been able to render peculiarly conspicuous service. As would be expected, it is a denomination which has never made any exclusive claims. It has no heaven-bestowed franchise, no peculiar intimacy of acquaintance with the divine mind. No other denomination need get a right of way across its domain in order to reach the city of Christian unity. It has a genial, yet militant indifference to questions of ceremonial and forms of sacramental observance. It has the minimum of shibboleths. It is conscious of its own frailties as well as those of others. It is a denomination which is willing to lose and often has lost members and prestige in order to be fraternal. Its loose type of organization has made possible a quick response to opportunities of co-operation, local or general. It has witnessed

[9]

Congregationalism

for the principle of co-operation and paid the price of its witnessing. Most of all, it has been willing to co-operate with other bodies without asking too many questions about credentials.

By such qualities the Congregational denomination has been known. It has not always been true to these principles nor made the most of its influence. But its steady and effective leadership in the process of reuniting Christendom is not to be doubted.

(2) A second movement has during the period profoundly reshaped the inner life and thought of the church. It sprang from the growth of the scientific spirit and the astounding results of its labors. The process of emancipating men from a congenital tendency to fruitless speculation was long and trying. Beginning with Bacon and Newton, it never acquired momentum until within recent decades. Then it came with a rush which has never been checked. Under its pressure men have searched the heavens and sounded the seas; they have blasted the rocks, watched the flight of birds and studied the growth of plants; they have dissected the

[10]

in Recent History

tissues of the body and scanned the action of the soul; they have resurveyed human history and reappraised the world's literature. As a result, old sciences have been made new and new ones created. Men have wrought their discoveries into countless inventions. They have enlarged the potencies of life and tested every fiber of its structure. Every belief has been challenged, every affirmation forced to the proof. A hunger for fact, eager and resistless, has seized upon the world.

It goes without saying that such a period has been one of profound mental disturbance. Men do not easily abandon old thoughts and accept new ones. The geologist, the chemist, the astronomer, the physicist and the historian have all been under the strain of the demand of the time. But in the delicate and sensitive realm of religion the disturbance has been most profound. For religion is not a matter of the intellect alone, but is a compound of thought and feeling, of sacred memories, holy associations, priceless hopes, of high issues—it involves the whole man. Imagine, then, the

[11]

Congregationalism

consternation as through the '70s and '80s there rose the tide of demand that in this field, too, men should accept the tests of science. From the left wing of the scientific camp came the contemptuous assertion that the historic Christian faith must be abandoned. From every wing came the call to submit our cherished Bible and our historic creeds to fresh inquiry and merciless dissection.

The response was various. A few—a very few—accepted the claim of the hostile group of scientists and, some with sorrow, some with joy, threw their faith upon the scrap heap. Others—a larger number—drew behind their defences, closed the portals and called out to the scientific besiegers, "We will have none of your so-called tests. Your new truth is falsehood. You are enemies of the Gospel. The guilt of lost souls will be upon your heads." Still others—a great company—troubled and perplexed, silently went about their tasks unable to see the way before them, but confident that God in good time would clear the path.

It was a crucial time for the church of

[12]

in Recent History

Christ. Priceless interests were at stake. The progress of Christ's Kingdom might easily have been set back for generations.

What actually happened? We are still in the thick of the process and no final answer can be given. All the forces above named are still operative. But one thing is clear. When the test came the Congregational denomination was fitted by her history and temper to meet its demands as was no other Christian body. To begin with, she had been mercifully preserved from committing herself to an official creed. She was thus free of the implied pledge to do no further thinking. Moreover, the enlightened men who put the Congregational ship upon the ways took care that it should rest on knowledge. Sixteen years after the Plymouth Landing they founded a college. Their successors kept on founding colleges until a chain of them stretched across the land. They dedicated these colleges to the broad freedom of the republic of letters as well as to sturdy loyalty to the Gospel of Christ. These colleges have both expressed and leavened the denomination's life. They

[13]

Congregationalism

are vivid object lessons symbolizing the value of knowledge and by implication of all knowledge. Under their influence and that of the group of forces to which they belong the Congregational churches had in some measure learned that the book of God is manifold and that all its parts are one.

With this background and mood Congregationalism came to the testing time. Its people did not escape the strain and bewilderment which others felt. Some lost their footing. Some spoke with more warmth than light. Few were without anxiety. But they quickly rallied. Conscious of the crisis and determined to follow the truth, our great communion drew together to feel its way out into the new and broader day. The pathway cleared as we went forward. The face of science, which had seemed sinister, proved friendly. Its more extreme claims were seen to be groundless. Under its inquiries the universe grew larger. Its scalpel cut away some excrescences which had grown upon the Christian faith. Its helpless ignorance in the face of ultimate problems revealed its limitations. Gradually

[14]

order came among the materials of thought. Part fitted to part as hand to hand. Fear died away. The voice of distrust was hushed. We found ourselves dwelling in a new house of faith which under God we had rebuilt over our heads without ever having gone out into the gloom of unbelief. Within the walls of that house were some new possessions, but the old treasure was there, too. Best of all Jesus Christ, our Divine Lord, our Human Friend, was still the Master of the house.

It is hard to estimate the significance of the leadership thus given in a great hour of the church's history. It is sufficient to express the conviction that when the calm judgment of the future shall be made up it will be recorded in words of no measured import that at a time of peril for the Church of Christ there stood at the parting of the ways a group of people called Congregationalists, under whose leadership Christian faith moved out into a new era of vision and power.

(3) A third chief feature of the half-century has been the awakening of the church

to a greatly enlarged consciousness of the range and gravity of its social obligations. It is one of the grim humors of history that the Christian Church, whose charter is found in the recorded words of Jesus Christ, should have been somewhat over 1800 years in reaching the point where social relationships and social institutions became an object of prime concern. For Jesus Christ, from the day when he chose the keynote of his ministry in the synagogue at Nazareth to the day when he bade his disciples undertake a world-wide endeavor to make disciples and teach them Christian ethics, was ever talking of the Kingdom of God and interpreting the will of the King in its bearing upon poverty and riches, marriage and divorce, suffering and death, brotherhood and justice. One can understand how the church might conceivably have failed to catch his message of individual salvation. It is impossible to see how she escaped perceiving his concern for social salvation. But escape it she did in very large measure. One must not, of course, forget the vast volume of social effort which has marked the Chris-

tian centuries. But its range was narrow, being largely confined to the relief of suffering. Its motive was often faulty, having merit-making as its basis. Its vision was limited, looking to present distress, not to ultimate causes. Its conception of social welfare was vicious, being identified with the interests of the ecclesiastical organization.

At last the turn has come. The Spirit of Jesus Christ ceaselessly moving upon the souls of men has led a great company to see that parallel to the duty of winning men to God in personal faith and obedience is that of shaping the community for God through the adoption of just laws, the creation of democratic institutions, the establishment of fraternal relationships and the opening of the widest possible door of opportunity to every man. With an ardor born of the new vision, a great company of people are toiling to secure a redeemed society. It is not easy to estimate the net results of their efforts. But the sum of their endeavors is so great and so honorable as to give new heart to all who look for the

Congregationalism

coming of the city of God. They have founded great philanthropies, made a sacrificial struggle against disease, created a new science of sanitation, revolutionized methods of dealing with criminals and defectives, conducted a sustained assault upon the saloon, made a beginning upon the extermination of the social evil, largely rooted out the spoils system, made the political ringster an outcast, curbed the power of predatory wealth, introduced a new standard of commercial ethics, waged a growingly successful war on behalf of the child toiler, protected the wage-earning woman, safeguarded life and limb in industry, lifted into view the banner of industrial peace and aroused the conscience of the world to perceive the criminality of war. As the thought ranges over the history suggested by these phrases, one is at a loss whether to wonder most at the fertility and pertinacity of evil or the vigor of social zeal which has been enlisted to root it out. Paul saw that by the law sin was made to abound. By the new sensitiveness of the social conscience a whole world of communal sin has been

[18]

in Recent History

revealed and some of it under God purged away.

One must weigh his language carefully in naming the source of this movement. But the most cautious statement conceivable will recognize that it is mainly to be found in Protestantism. Under the impulse and within the shelter of its freedom the initiative has been taken. By its sympathy individuals have been encouraged to press forward, through its ministrations the needful dynamic has been generated and political strength furnished for certain great reforms. It would be disingenuous to ignore the fact that many local churches and even whole denominations have had no share in this holy crusade. It would be ungenerous to leave unacknowledged the service rendered by men of the Roman and Jewish faiths; as well as those of no faith at all. But, broadly speaking, the social revival of the last half-century has been within and by Protestantism. Trace to its source any significant effort for industrial justice, world peace, political purity, destruction of organized evil, the promotion of democracy

[19]

Congregationalism

or the redress of wrongs, and you will find it in the churches which date from the Reformation. They have not only been witnesses to the divine life and divine law which demand these things, but they have produced the leaders who have battled for them and in one measure and another have put their power behind efforts thus inaugurated. It was by no accident that the central feature of the first National Convention of the Federal Council of Churches was the enunciation of a social platform—a platform so sane and strong, so sweeping and searching, so filled with a passion of desire for the coming in of the society of brotherly men, that it instantly became a classic among the thirty denominations represented in that convention.

Has Congregationalism measured up to its duty in this field? One has little disposition to make large claims. The thing done has been so small, the vast undone is so great, apathy and disloyalty have been so common in all communions that there is scant place for pride. But the question must be faced. The denomination which

[20]

can detect in itself no vital response to the new social appeal stands disgraced before God and men. Particularly would this be true of Congregationalism. For it stood committed by its principles and history to a social message. It was founded in protest against ecclesiastical autocracy. It adopted as its central affirmation the equality of men before God and in the world. It speedily emancipated itself from its inherited union with the state. It was early in the field as one after another modern movements of reform arose. Whether the battle was against intemperance or against slavery, against intolerance or public dishonor, Congregational men and women were usually found ranged on the right side. It would have been both strange and shameful if such a history had issued in no conspicuous results these fifty years past. Happily, no such outcome has been recorded. The Pilgrim faith has continued to produce social fruits.

Perhaps the clearest indication of the nature of these fruits and the spirit behind them is to be found in the character of the

social leadership which has sprung from the loins of Congregationalism. It is not hard to furnish examples. They are such as these:—

Josiah Strong, pioneer in the field of social education.

Washington Gladden, life-long foe of privilege, life-long friend of high and low.

Lyman Abbott, Christian publicist for fifty years, pleading for progress by pen and voice.

William J. Tucker, early in the field with wise vision of the demand of the time.

William Hayes Ward, social idealist, champion of the dispossessed and belated.

Graham Taylor, immersing his life in the life of the lowly for Christ's sake.

Samuel B. Capen, carrying the world of human need and sin upon his heart.

And beyond these a great company, such as Charles M. Sheldon and Edward A. Steiner and Owen Lovejoy and Raymond Robins, who have wrought as God gave them grace and light for human brother-

hood. If anyone imagines that these men and their like are isolated units unrelated to the fellowship to which they belong he imagines a strange thing. It is nearer the truth to say that great areas of social feeling and a great sum of social passion combined to produce them. They speak for a multitude of like-minded men and women.

Only the first chapters of this story have been written. The great unfinished task stretches before us. Society, torn by strife, poisoned by hate, cleft by class lines, stained with crime and sin, groaning beneath its self-imposed load, has yet to be refashioned according to the mind of Christ. There is no branch of His church which has larger power or a clearer duty to lead forward in the task than ours. The hour calls for a steady, patient, tolerant, but eager and indomitable effort to mould our thought into unity, to mass our strength for conquest, and to labor with unfaltering faith for the redeemed social order which is to come. Some of us have declared our purpose to do this, for in the creed by which the Kansas City

Congregationalism

Council voiced its faith we read: "We hold it to be the mission of the Church of Christ to proclaim the gospel to all mankind, exalting the worship of the one true God, and laboring for the progress of knowledge, the promotion of justice, the reign of peace, and the realization of human brotherhood."

(4) The final and in some sense crowning feature of the half-century has been the enormous expansion of missionary effort. It was not reserved to this period to hear and accept for the first time Christ's call to carry the message of the Cross to all men. A hundred years ago and more the church yielded to this call. But the amount and range of her activities in this field have increased during the fifty years beyond all boldest dreams of those who began the work. The theme is a familiar one and need not be discussed at length. But it is worth while to face afresh the astounding facts. When the Civil War closed a small group of organizations was engaged in pushing the church and its message into outlying parts of our own land. Theirs was mainly a frontier task, a task which is not yet done.

[24]

in Recent History

Presently, as a result of the westward drift, country communities in the eastern and middle states, depleted of their strength, became home mission fields and their number has steadily grown as state after state has been subjected to the same process.

Then with something of surprise the church found itself facing the appeal of belated peoples—Negroes, Mountaineers, Indians and the like. Twelve millions or more they number today.

Presently the swift current cityward began. From a nation one-fifth urban we have become in fifty years one in which city and country are almost evenly balanced and every day throws the weight increasingly on the city side. New England has not above 500,000 people living outside of city and village. Greater New York has more inhabitants than the thirteen states whose population is smallest. The crushing responsibility of evangelizing the city has come upon us in a day.

Last of all through the open gates came the immigrant flood. All races, colors and tongues have made their homes here. In

[25]

Congregationalism

ever-increasing ratio they come from lands which have not the open Book. The church must care for them in Christ's name. She faces the Frontier, the Country, the Belated Groups, the City and the Immigrant—a five-fold field where there was practically but one fifty years ago. And it is hard to say which of the five makes the larger demand.

A like process has gone on beyond the seas. The few foreign mission boards at work in the fifties had not gotten much beyond the fundamental task which they first assumed—that of winning converts and planting churches. But to this the school was added, with the translator's labor and the printing press; then the industrial mission, the hospital and the physician, until by successive expansions of function the foreign missionary's work is interwoven with all the life, personal, social and civic, of the nations he serves. If one desires to find a place where the heart-beat of the world can be felt, he should go not to some international mercantile house, not to the office of a great newspaper, not to the department of

[26]

state, but to the modest rooms where the officers of a foreign mission board feel day by day the touch of the world's sin and need, its aspiration and desire.

The response of the church to this enlarged demand has been, needless to say, inadequate. Very tardily and grudgingly have the servants of God risen in answer to God's call. But they have not been deaf nor blind. In the aggregate their response has been vast beyond comprehension. When one learns that in America last year 19,000,000 of dollars was raised for foreign missions alone and that, maintained by these funds, 6,000 missionaries and tens of thousands of native workers were at work beyond the sea, he gets some idea of the degree to which foreign missions have found lodgment in the conscience of the church. And when he adds to this a slightly larger sum given to carry the Gospel to the isolated, the unprivileged and the outcast in our land, the total is surely impressive. It is not possible without unjustifiable labor to secure even approximately comprehensive figures for fifty years ago. At the best they would

[27]

be largely an estimate. But some hint as to the comparison between then and now may be had from the records of a single missionary board. The American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society began its work just a hundred years ago. In 1864 it had gotten fairly under way. But since that date its annual receipts have multiplied by 8, its native workers by 14, school attendance by 14½, church members by 8, schools by 10, churches by 4, missionaries by 58, and mission stations by 7.

Similar comparisons in the field of home missions would yield similar results. For although certain home mission organizations developed earlier than their foreign mission neighbors, various denominations, such as the Southern Methodists, and Disciples, now spending great sums for home missions, were spending exceedingly little in 1864.

A review of the whole case leaves one with the feeling that the vast missionary undertakings of our time are essentially the creation of the half-century past. Their income, their plant, their methods, their force, their

[28]

backing, even their hopes and dreams have in preponderant degree risen from the warm soil of the expanding era through which we have just been passing. How pertinent the comment of the situation just described upon the occasional assertion that the Church of Christ is a spent force.

Congregationalists must look upon their share in this missionary expansion with mingled emotions. They would not expect that the growth of their own work would be relatively as large as some others because of the fact that as the earliest and most energetic in projecting missionary work they had a larger volume in hand fifty years ago. The facts appear to confirm this supposition.

The American Board is now expending annually not far from four times as much as in 1863, has over twice as many workers and more than thirty-five times the amount of invested funds. Its recent high-water mark of above \$1,200,000 income for a year proves the vitality of the convictions of present-day Congregationalists concerning foreign missions. On the other hand, the increase in income and workers is not in

[29]

Congregationalism

proportion to the enlargement of denominational resources.

The Congregational Home Missionary Society has expended four times as much as in 1863 and has two and a half times the number of workers. This in like way marks a cheering growth, but falls short of the full goal to which present possibilities and needs point.

The American Missionary Association expends nine times as much and has twenty-four times as many workers. It will be noted that the variations in growth as between these organizations are in part due to difference in date of organization, the American Board having been organized in 1810, the Congregational Home Missionary Society in 1826 and the American Missionary Association in 1846.

While it thus appears that while in 50 years Congregational mission work has forged strongly ahead, it is also true that the last two decades of that period have witnessed a checking of the rate of expansion. At certain points the level is where it was twenty years ago. Remembering the growth

[30]

in Recent History

of the denomination and the swift increase of wealth, one must needs be thoughtful. It is an honorable place which we have had in these fifty years of outreaching missionary conquest. It might have been more so.

If the positions taken be valid it is a very notable half-century of the church's life in America which has been under discussion. An era which has seen a marked drawing together of dissevered Christendom, the radical readjustment of Christian thought to meet the demands of expanding knowledge, the awakening of the church to a great and fundamental aspect of her duty with the achievement consequent upon that awakening, and the expansion of a world-wide missionary propaganda from feeblest beginnings to a vast body of undertakings, is surely outranked by few or none of the epochs of the church's life. Only two others are in its class. One is the era of the primitive church, when the mighty force released in Jesus Christ made conquest of the Roman world. The other is the era of the Reformation, when the church came out of her long

[31]

Congregationalism

bondage and began her career of freedom. Even as we read the story of these periods with quickened pulse, so we may read the story of the years which lie just behind. Happy are the men who have lived and wrought in such a time. Happy are they who have furthered the sacred interests which have found in this half-century a new birth of growth and power.

The history which has been recited is surely most heartening to those who serve in the ranks of Congregationalism. A denomination which in so significant an epoch of the life of the church has been able to bear any sort of an honorable share has reason to thank God and take courage. But one which, sharing four great movements, has had clear leadership in two, conspicuous place in a third, and a steady, substantial portion in a fourth may well bow down in humble, reverent gratitude and rise to meet in the strength of God the greater issues, the broader service, the more significant victories of the time to come.

[32]