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THE NEW ENGLAND CHURCHES AND THE FIRST PRESBYTERY.

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It is important in connection with the subject of the New England Churches and the First Presbytery, to understand that there was a mutual fellowship and frequent correspondence between many of the Congregational ministers of New England and the ministers who organized the First Presbytery in Philadelphia, Pa., of the Presbyterian Church in America, in 1706, prior to, at the time of, and after its establishment. This fellowship and correspondence were based upon the acceptance of a common faith, and the recognition by Congregationalists of the large element in the New England Puritan ministry and churches which held to Presbyterian views in church government. The nature and influence of the resulting relationships upon the development of early American Presbyterianism is of importance in connection with Presbyterian history, and will be considered under two main heads:

1. THE SITUATION IN NEW ENGLAND.

The New England churches were, theologically, churches holding to the Westminster Confession of Faith as their standard of doctrine. That Confession was adopted by them in 1648, at the Synod held in Cambridge, Mass., and was re-

affirmed with slight modifications in another Synod held at the same place, in 1680. Similar action was taken by the churches of Connecticut, at Saybrook, in 1708. So general was the acceptance of this Confession that Cotton Mather, in his *Ratio Disciplina*, published in 1726, writes: ¹

“There is no need of Reporting what is the *Faith* professed by the Churches in *New England*; For every one knows, That they perfectly adhere to the CONFESSION OF FAITH published by the *Assembly of Divines* at *Westminster*, and afterwards renewed by the *Synod* at the *Savoy*; And received by the Renowned *Kirk* of *Scotland*. . . . I cannot learn, That among all the Pastors of Two Hundred Churches, there is one *Arminian*: much less an *Arian*, or a *Gentilist*.”

New England was at this period thoroughly Calvinistic in doctrine.

The governmental situation as to the churches in New England is one that requires to be considered, first from the Congregational standpoint. When the Puritan churches of that region adopted the Westminster Confession in 1648, they took exception to the chapters which dealt with church government. In place of said chapters, there came into existence what is known as the Cambridge Platform, first adopted in 1648 and reaffirmed by the Synod held in 1680. The approval of the Synod was unanimous for articles such as the four following, the first two contained in Chapter XVI of the Platform, and dealing with the civil magistrate:

“3. Magistrates have power to call a synod, by calling to the churches to send forth their elders and other messengers, to counsel, and assist them in matters of religion, etc.”

“4. It belongeth, unto synods and councils, to debate and determine controversies of faith, and cases of conscience;” etc., etc.”

The other two articles are found in Chapter XVII, and read:

“8. Idolatry, blasphemy, heresy, venting corrupt and pernicious opinions, that destroy the foundation, open contempt of the word preached, profanation of the Lord’s day, disturbing the peaceable ad-

¹ Page 5.

² *A Platform of Church Discipline, etc.*, ed. Boston, 1772, p. 59.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

ministration and exercise of the worship and holy things of God, and the like, are to be restrained and punished by Civil Authority."

"9. If any church, one or more shall grow schismatical, rending itself from the communion of other churches, or shall walk incorrigibly or obstinately in any corrupt way of their own, contrary to the rule of the word; in such case the magistrate (Josh. xxii) is to put forth his coercive power, as the matter shall require."⁴

Many persons conceive of early Congregationalism in the light of its present twentieth century condition; when it is virtually a creedless denomination and one largely lacking in denominational authority. How different the situation was in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in Massachusetts and Connecticut, is shown by the following comments of a distinguished Congregational historian, upon the Synod of 1680:

"To the thinking of the Synod, Congregationalism was vastly less democratic than modern Congregational practice conceives the system to be. It was viewed as of exclusive divine authority, and as subject to the interference of the civil ruler, should its churches swerve in doctrine or administration from the God-given standard."⁵

Again:

"This Synod (1680), adopted the Cambridge Platform as well as the Westminster Confession, and was the completion of that movement toward confederation which characterized early American Congregationalism from the arrival of the Puritans, which was greatly strengthened by the establishment of Congregationalism as a State Church, and had its strongest impulse from the efforts of the civil and ecclesiastical forces of the new settlements to guard their institutions and faith from what they deemed dangerous encroachments."⁶

And again, the Commonwealths of Massachusetts and Connecticut, until the first part of the nineteenth century,

"maintained the principle that all persons should be taxed for the support of religious institutions, and that there was one standard polity and faith in each town or parish from which all others were dissenters."

⁴ *A Platform of Church Discipline*, etc., ed. Boston, 1772, p. 64.

⁵ Walker, *Congregational Churches*, p. 162.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

The ecclesiastical system of New England, let us understand clearly, at the time of the formation of the First Presbytery at Philadelphia, in 1706, was based upon the union of Church and State, and conformity both in faith and in church government to the standards approved, was capable of enforcement by the strong arm of the civil law. Within the Congregational churches of New England, in 1706, the civil authority was supreme for the punishment of heresy as well as of immorality, for the definition of orthodoxy as well as the limitation of church power.

As preliminary to the consideration of the Presbyterian situation in New England, it is to be noted that one fundamental mistake in connection with early American Ecclesiastical History is to take it for granted that because a church was organized by Puritans, or by New Englanders, that therefore, it was of necessity a Congregational church. The claim is in consequence often made that Puritan churches established in South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, New Jersey and New York, were in every case Congregational in government. Take as an illustration the churches organized early in the seventeenth century in the Colony of Virginia, and to which ministers from Massachusetts were sent. It is assumed that these churches were Congregational because they were Puritan, and yet they had Elders, and when the members were driven out of Virginia by persecution, and were reorganized as churches in Maryland, the churches were, in part, Presbyterian.⁷ It is to be remembered that the great Puritan party in the Church of England was divided into two wings, the one holding to Presbyterian and the other to Independent views of church government. The sharp separation which developed in England as between these parties at the time of the establishment of the Church of England in its Presbyterian form in 1645, did not develop in the American Colonies until much later. Especially was this true in those colonies where the Puritans were comparatively few in number.

⁷ Briggs, *American Presbyterianism*, pp. 110, 111.

Passing from Virginia to New England, it is to be noted that Presbyterian ministers and churches constituted a considerable part of the body ecclesiastical. The Church at Plymouth (1630) was in reality a Presbyterian Church, with Brewster as its Ruling Elder. Its pastor, John Robinson, was inclined to Presbyterian views, and his church in Leyden was conformed to the order of the French Reformed Church.⁸ Professor Walker states:

“Not all the founders thought alike on polity. At Newbury, Massachusetts, the pastor and teacher, Thomas Parker and James Noyes, were so far inclined toward Presbyterianism, that they did away with the participation of the ordinary membership in church acts save in ministerial election. At Hingham Rev. Peter Hobart was of the same opinion.”⁹

John Eliot, the first missionary to the Indians, published a book (1665) entitled, “The Divine Management of Gospel Churches by the Ordinance of Councils, constituted in order according to the Scriptures, which may be a means of uniting those two holy and eminent parties, the Presbyterian and the Congregational.”¹⁰ In 1690 an Association of Ministers was formed in Massachusetts, which met annually thereafter at the college in Cambridge, including both Presbyterians and Congregationalists, and the Presbyterians were in sufficient numbers to require specific provision for their views in the so-called “Heads of Agreement,” adopted in London, in Old England, in 1691, and quickly accepted in New England. Referring to those “Heads,” Cotton Mather states: “The Presbyterian Ministers of this country do find it no difficulty to practice the substance of it, in and with their several congregations.”¹¹ New England Presbyterians were evidently not few in number.

⁸ Prince, *Chronology*, pp. 114, 120.

⁹ Walker, *Congregational Churches*, p. 161.

¹⁰ Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, vol. 1, Hartford, 1853, p. 555.

¹¹ Mather, *Magnalia*, p. 272.

There was also the tendency among Congregationalists toward a centralized ecclesiasticism already referred to. But this was checked in a curious manner. In 1725, Cotton Mather and other New England ministers, under a feeling of need as to a greater care and thoroughness in discipline, petitioned the Civil Government for the calling of another Synod. The Episcopalians in the Colony, however, interfered, prevented the calling of the Synod, and the Congregational movement toward centralization came abruptly to an end. From the Synod at Cambridge in 1680, the Congregational churches of this country had no general convention, until one met at Albany in 1852. What gave promise in Massachusetts for an ecclesiasticism with something of denominational authority, thus came to an untimely end. The "development had gone to semi-Presbyterian lengths in Connecticut; it had nearly reached the same goal in Massachusetts."¹² Dexter joins with Walker in his conclusions as to the character of early Congregationalism, and speaks of it as a "Congregationalized Presbyterianism or a Presbyterianized Congregationalism which had its roots in the one system, and its branches in the other."¹³

Here it is proper to emphasize the fact that the churches of the Connecticut Colony were not in harmony with the independent or Congregational system of church government. They established, in 1709, at Saybrook, Connecticut, consociations of churches and associations of ministers. Their church government as already stated was at least semi-Presbyterian. Indeed, the Hartford North Association as late as 1799, declared by formal resolution that the constitution of the Connecticut churches contained "the essentials of the Church of Scotland or Presbyterian Church in America," and the General Association of Connecticut in 1805, called the Saybrook Platform, adopted in 1709, "The constitution of the Presbyterian Church in Connecticut." The sympathy between Connecticut and Philadelphia was natural, and led for more than a generation to an increasing

¹² Walker, *Congregational Churches*, p. 213.

¹³ Dexter, *Congregationalism*, p. 463.

correspondence, until in 1766 the Presbyterian Synod and the General Association of Connecticut formed a General Convention for the defence of religious liberty.¹⁴

One feature of the Presbyterian church government was much emphasized by the New England Church during the seventeenth century. The office of Ruling Elder was established by the Puritans, in their attempt to restore the New Testament model of church government. The Cambridge Platform (1680), sets forth the duties of the Ruling Elder minutely in ten articles, the preamble to which reads: "The Ruling Elder's work is to join with the pastor and teacher in those acts of spiritual rule which are distinct from the ministry of the word and sacraments." Again, the Platform, Chapter VII, Section 1, states: "The Ruling Elder's office is distinct from the office of pastor and teacher." Cotton Mather¹⁵ states that the Cambridge Association of Ministers passed by a unanimous vote the declaration that "Ruling Elders are appointed for the assistance of their pastors in the government of the church," and Mather himself is responsible for the following: "Let it first be recognized that all the other church officers are the assistants of the pastor. The pastor may be the Ruling Elder, and yet he may have Elders who assist him in ruling." Presbyterian principles of church government were held, to a very considerable extent, in the New England Colonial churches, and the number of Presbyterians in New England was so considerable that in much of public church action they were constantly recognized. Indeed, the Presbyterian churches of that section of the Colonies continued to grow in numbers and in influence until the Revolutionary War. In 1775, there was a Synod of New England, totally distinct from the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, having three Presbyteries and about eighty congregations.¹⁶ The evidence is clear that Presbyterians were always a considerable element in the population of New England, that their principles of

¹⁴ *Minutes*, General Convention, 1766-75.

¹⁵ Mather, *Magnalia*, p. 240.

¹⁶ Blaikie, *Presbyterianism in New England*, pp. 168, 204.

polity were largely held, and that they were easily able of themselves to furnish both ministers and members for Presbyterian Churches in the Middle Colonies.

2. THE SITUATION AS TO THE FIRST PRESBYTERY.

One of the chief factors in connection with the organization of the First Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., in Philadelphia, Pa., in 1706, has been supposed by many to have been a Congregational influence which tended to large liberty both as to creed and government. What has been said in the first part of this article is sufficient evidence that little in the way of liberty of belief or of practice for Presbyterians, had its origin with the Congregationalists in the Massachusetts or Connecticut Colonies. The fact is that the principal colony, in 1706, where the Presbyterian Church could be organized, first into a Presbytery and then into a Synod, without asking permission from the civil government, was the Province of Pennsylvania. As already shown, when the Congregationalists of Massachusetts twenty years later (1726), desired to hold a Synod, they were prevented by the civil power. It was chiefly in the Quaker Colony that true religious liberty prevailed, and that an open door was found for the Presbyterian Church. Further, in this connection, it is to be emphasized that both in Scotland and Ireland, there was at the date of the organization of the First Presbytery, just as strenuous an insistence upon the union of Church and State, and upon authoritative creeds, as there was in New England. It will not do to account for the Presbyterian Church as it came into denominational form in Philadelphia, by reference to the then existing ecclesiasticisms, either in Great Britain or New England.

Reference, however, despite the facts now stated is persistently made to the idea that there must have been some New England Congregational influence in the First Presbytery and the General Synod, which was necessarily antagonistic to the Scotch and Irish influence. On this point the opinion of Gillette is quoted:

"The argument for the Scotticism of the original Presbytery, drawn from the presumption that, if any considerable New England element was in union with it, it would have manifested itself in a form of government more or less allied to Congregationalism, is utterly invalid. The early ecclesiasticism of New England was largely Presbyterian." "

It is distinctly affirmed that American Presbyterianism was organized neither on the so-called "strict, rigid and exclusive Scotch system," nor on the similar New England Congregational basis. The tolerant character of American Presbyterianism was in direct contrast with the Church Government organized in Massachusetts and Connecticut. For instance, in 1637 the Rev. Francis Doughty was expelled from the Massachusetts Colony because of his views as to church membership, and as late as 1743 Rev. Samuel Finley, afterwards President of Princeton College, was expelled from Connecticut because he dared to preach the Gospel without permission from the civil authorities, who had passed an offensive law aimed at the ministers engaged in the great revival under George Whitefield. The Rev. Elizur Goodrich, of Connecticut, writing at the time of the War for American Independence, states:

"It is certain that for a considerable time there was too much of a coercive uniformity in the laws of the Colony, but this by degrees disappears. Those laws which were inconsistent with freedom of thought and liberty of conscience are either wholly repealed and set aside, or so modeled that no one can be oppressed by them."

This change of attitude in Connecticut and other New England colonies was in part due to Presbyterian influence.

But whatever of Presbyterian views prevailed in New England or elsewhere, all the Puritans sought often to co-operate with one another. This is the reason why Philadelphia Presbyterians in their early days of financial weakness looked to the wealthier New England churches for assistance. Many Congregationalists and Presbyterians recognized one another as brethren in Christ, as standing for a common faith, and as all seeking the establishment of the kingdom

"Gillette, *Hist. Presb. Ch.*, Vol. I, p. 25.

of God in the Colonies. They were not as diverse in their views of church government as are their descendants. So closely were they allied that Gillette states accurately the situation when he declares that,

“Mather and the ‘New England Doctors’ would have acted a part unworthy of themselves if they had lacked active sympathy with Presbyterians in the neighboring colonies. If they could have modeled their own churches anew, they would have secured them the advantages of Synods and ruling elders.”¹⁸

In connection with the history of early Presbyterianism in the city of Philadelphia, the question is sometimes raised as to the ecclesiastical views of the Rev. Jedidiah Andrews, the first pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, and one of the leaders of the First Presbytery. The following facts are worthy of consideration in the answer to this inquiry. Mr. Andrews was born in Hingham, Mass. The pastor of the church in that town, the Rev. Peter Hobart, is recognized by Cotton Mather and Professor Walker, as having been a Presbyterian. It was under the influence of Hobart that Andrews was trained as a lad, and Andrews’ mother was living at Hingham in 1730, as shown by a letter of his, dated in October of that year. Mr. Andrews appears to have been ordained by Presbyterian ministers in Philadelphia in 1701.

The Episcopal missionary, Talbot, in a letter dated in 1703, written from Philadelphia, said: “The Presbyterians here come a great way to lay hands on one another”; and Clayton, the First Church of England minister in the city, also said of Andrews (in 1698), “I have often talked with the Presbyterian minister.”¹⁹ Andrews was an organizing member of the First Presbytery, was Moderator for the first time in 1709, and took thereafter an increasingly prominent part in the work of the church, both in Presbytery and Synod. He was present in Presbytery in 1714, when the order as to assistants and session books, hereafter referred to, was passed, and no negative vote is recorded. He was not among those

¹⁸ Gillette, Vol. I, p. 24.

¹⁹ Briggs, *American Presbyterianism*, p. 125.

who protested against the Act for Overtures in 1721, and he was a member of the committee which reported upon the matter of the adoption of the Confession of Faith in 1729. In his letter of 1730, above referred to, there is a paragraph referring to the immigrants from Ireland which is pertinent. It reads:

"Besides divers new congregations that are forming by these new-comers, we all call ourselves Presbyterians, none pretending to be called Congregationalists in this province. In the Jerseys there are some Congregational Assemblies—that is, some of the people are inclined that way, being originally of New England—yet they all submit to our Presbyteries readily enough; and the ministers are all Presbyterians, though mostly from New England."²²

Nowhere in all Andrews' record, so far as known, is there anything to show that he was other than a Presbyterian.

There is also at times the statement made that early Presbyterian congregations in Philadelphia were governed by "Committeemen," meaning by that, Congregational Committeemen, the basis of the allegation being the absence of early sessional records for the Philadelphia First Church. The Third Church Records, however, contain information of importance upon this matter. In 1767 a meeting was held to organize the Third Church, and the first resolution adopted provides for Committeemen to "transact all the secular business of the body." The Committeemen were evidently the officers now known as Trustees. The third resolution adopted by the Third Church meeting, is decisive as to the then existing form of church government in Philadelphia Presbyterian Congregations, for it reads:

"The Third Congregation shall be governed like the other Presbyterian Congregations in this city, by their own Session and Committee to be chosen out of the members of the said Congregation."²³

These words are clear in their attestation of the existence of sessions for many years previous to 1767, in both the First and Second Churches of Philadelphia.

²² Barnes, *Manual: First Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia*, p. 11.

²³ Gibbons, *Old Pine Street*, p. 31.

Much has been made in connection with the First Presbytery, of the "Heads of Agreement" adopted in London in 1691, and resulting in the body called the "United Ministers formerly known as Presbyterian and Congregational." That organization was a most worthy effort to bring about a practical union of the two great parties of the English Puritans. There is no historical basis, however, for the averment that the Ministers from Great Britain who were secured by Mr. Makemie and others for the Presbytery of Philadelphia, were expected to labor in harmony with the provisions of said "Heads of Agreement." Those Heads were in force only for four years in London, 1691-1695, and the Fund established in connection therewith was in 1695 left to the English Presbyterians, by the withdrawal of the Congregationalists.²² It is not likely that a defunct agreement could have been of use to Philadelphia Presbyterians. The principal minister in London at the time of the establishment of the First Presbytery was the celebrated Daniel Williams, D.D., a prominent Welsh Presbyterian, and Sir Edmund Harrison of the same city, to whom the Presbytery wrote a letter in 1709, was also a distinguished Presbyterian.²³ The funds the Presbytery sought for in London were in Presbyterian hands alone. Compromises, such as the one found in the "Heads of Agreement," are as a rule unsatisfactory and short lived, and although these "Heads" were adopted also in Boston in 1691, they continued in force in New England but for a limited period, and were unacceptable to many Congregationalists.²⁴

It is sometimes alleged that the first Presbytery was a mere association of ministers for purposes of advice and counsel, organized under the "Heads of Agreement," and not a body with authority. The minutes of the First Presbytery are the evidence to the contrary, even if the "Heads" were not nine years dead in London in 1706. There is nowhere in the records of the body anything to distinguish as to ecclesiastical

²² Drysdale, *Presbyterian Church in England*, pp. 464-465.

²³ Briggs, *American Presbyterianism*, p. 161.

²⁴ Dexter, *Congregationalism*, p. 494.

character between the meetings of the Presbytery of Philadelphia in 1710 and in 1910. Indeed, it would have been singular if the ministers organizing the Presbytery had accepted in any particular modern Congregationalism. As already stated the Congregationalism of colonial times was an ecclesiastical system with authority, and above all, the authority of the civil power. It will not do to read the nineteenth century into the eighteenth, and so be guilty of an anachronism. The attempt so to do is made, however, when the action of Presbytery with reference to "Assistants" in 1714, is interpreted as being the introduction into Presbytery of a feature of Congregationalism. The action reads:

"For the better establishing and settling congregations, it is ordered and appointed that in every congregation there be a sufficient number of assistants chosen, to aid the minister in the management of congregational affairs, and there be a book of records to that effect, and that the same be annually brought here to be revised by the Presbytery."*

This act certainly has the tone of Presbyterian authority over congregations, and calls not only for assistants to aid the ministers, but also for sessional record books, and for revision of records by Presbytery. But who were these "Assistants" to aid the ministers? The answer is suggested by the Cambridge Platform. That Platform, as already stated, provides for Ruling Elders to aid pastors. The Cambridge Association of Ministers also by a unanimous vote, declared, about 1691, "That Ruling Elders are appointed for the *assistance* of their pastors," and Cotton Mather recognized all other church officers as *assistants* of the pastor. The word came from New England and was the equivalent of Ruling Elder. Its origin, as an ecclesiastical term, is to be found in the controversies in New England over the office of Ruling Elder, some persons holding that the pastor was the only Ruling Elder, some that there should be only one Ruling Elder in a church, and others holding that in each church there should be a number of Ruling Elders as assistants of the pastor.

* *Minutes, General Presbytery*, p. 37.

The Presbytery of Philadelphia employed, therefore, in its Act, a term about which there could be no misconception, and definitely declared that Ruling Elders were "assistants" of the pastor, and that there should be more than one in each congregation.

Further, the differences which arose early between parties in the General Synod of the Presbyterian Church, were not primarily due to the influence of New England Congregationalism, but to views which Cotton Mather and others of his way of thinking would have rejected. This appears by the minutes of the General Synod for 1721, when the following Act was adopted by it, *viz.*:

"As we have been for many years in the exercise of Presbyterian government and church discipline, as exercised by the Presbyterians in the best reformed Churches, as far as the nature and constitution of this country will allow, our opinion is, that if any brother have any overture to offer to be formed into an act by the Synod, for the better carrying on in the matter of our government and discipline, that he may bring it in against next Synod."*

This overture was carried in the affirmative by a majority, but six members protested against it. What the real animus of the protestants against the Act was, appears by the action taken at the Synod of 1722. The protestants that year withdrew their protest, and submitted four articles to the Synod. The first article reads:

"We freely grant, that there is full executive power of church government in Presbyteries and Synods, and that they may authoritatively, in the name of Christ, use the keys of church discipline to all proper intents and purposes, and that the keys of the church are committed to the church officers and them only."*

This is undiluted Presbyterianism. The one point to which the protestants appear to have taken decided exception was the calling of the resolutions of Synod by the designation, "Acts." While granting that "mere circumstantial of

* *Minutes, General Synod*, p. 68.

* *Ibid.*, p. 74.

church discipline belonged to ecclesiastical judicatories to determine as occasions occur," they yet said: "If these things are called 'Acts,' we will take no offense at the word, provided that these Acts be not imposed upon such as conscientiously dissent from them."²⁸ All the four articles were approved by the Synod, and it is to be emphasized that the things maintained through the protest were those rights of conscience, which establishments of religion, whether in New England or elsewhere, as a rule, do not incline to recognize.

The movement which resulted, in 1729, in the adoption of the Confession of Faith by the General Synod, is also a most important evidence of the fact that the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. was not influenced in certain particulars by New England Congregationalism in its attitude toward the Westminster Confession of Faith. American Presbyterians appear to have continued in the exercise of Presbyterian government and discipline for twenty-three years, before their formal adoption of the Confession and Catechisms. One reason for this delay was unquestionably that there was a general agreement in all the Puritan and Presbyterian churches upon theology. Boston and Philadelphia held unanimously to the same doctrinal Confession. The point of departure between the two was the power of the Civil Magistrate over the Church. In this power Boston believed and Philadelphia disbelieved. This is shown by the fact that when the Confession of Faith was adopted in Philadelphia in 1729, exception was taken to some clauses in the twentieth and twenty-third chapters, in the following words:

"The Synod do unanimously declare that they do not receive those articles in any such sense as to suppose the civil magistrate hath a controlling power over Synods with respect to the exercise of their ministerial authority, or the power to persecute any for their religion."²⁹

The Cambridge Platform, in its upholding of the power of the civil magistrate over Synods, and for the punishment of heresy, had evidently no affirmative influence in determining

²⁸ *Minutes, General Synod*, p. 74.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

the character of early American Presbyterianism. The union of Church and State, then dominant in New England, was undoubtedly one of the influences which led Presbyterians to take exceptions to the Westminster Confession, exceptions which were formally put into the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in 1788.

Reference is often made to the fact that when the Synod adopted the Confession and Catechisms in 1729, it utterly disclaimed "all legislative power and authority in the church." This statement is used as if it was a result of New England influence. It is a sufficient reply to point out that this is still the position of the Presbyterian Church, and was also its position in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Form of Government, in Chapter I, deals with preliminary principles, and declares, in Section 7:

"That all church power is only ministerial and declarative; that is to say, that the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and manners; that no church authority ought to pretend to make laws in virtue of their own authority, and that all their decisions should be founded upon the revealed will of God."

When the Synod, in 1729, used the language first above quoted it was because it held that the Holy Scriptures were the law of the Church, and not because it held that the Church had no power to enforce the laws found in the Word of God. The Synod's act was in full harmony with other language of the Form of Government, to the effect that "there is much greater danger from the usurped claim of making laws, than from the right of judging upon laws already made and common to all who profess the Gospel."

The Synod of 1729, while it disclaimed all legislative power and authority in the church, also declared its attachment to religious liberty in the following words:

"The Synod do not claim or pretend to any authority of imposing our faith upon other men's consciences, but do profess our just dissatisfaction and abhorrence of such impositions."*

* *Minutes, General Synod*, p. 94.

This declaration was in distinct opposition to the attitude of New England Congregationalism, and the American Presbyterian Church still holds to the position thus taken. Chapter XXIII, of the Confession of Faith, dealing with the civil magistrate was amended by the Church in 1788 by the insertion, among other changes, of the following:

"It is the duty of Civil Magistrates to protect the church of our common Lord, without giving preference to any denomination of Christians above the rest, in such a manner that all ecclesiastical persons whatever shall enjoy the full, free and unquestioned liberty of discharging every part of their sacred functions, without violence or danger."

And again:

"It is the duty of Civil Magistrates to protect the person and good name of all their people, in such an effectual manner, as that no person be suffered, either upon pretence of religion or infidelity to offer any indignity, violence, abuse, or injury to any other person whatsoever."

These amendments represent the position of the Presbyterian Church from 1706 to the present time upon religious liberty. Compare the above statements with the Cambridge Platform, and the antagonism between the amended Confession and said Platform, becomes most marked. Presbyterian loyalty to religious liberty was a development out of their own spiritual experiences and clear thinking.

The Synod also declared itself willing:

"To receive one another as Christ has received us to the glory of God, and admit to fellowship in sacred ordinances all such as we have grounds to believe Christ will at last admit to the Kingdom of Heaven."

Upon the matter of terms of admission to church membership, the position of the Synod is still that of the Presbyterian Church. The Larger Catechism, question 166, reads: "To whom is baptism to be administered?" Part of the answer is: "Baptism is not to be administered to

any that are out of the visible church until they confess their faith in Christ and obedience to him." The two acts referred to in this statement, viz.: a profession of faith in Christ and a profession of obedience unto Christ, are the only requirements that have ever been lawful in the Presbyterian Church in connection with admission to church membership. This catholic principle as to church fellowship appears also in the Westminster Confession of Faith. If at any time American Presbyterians have been narrower than their Standards it is not because of anything in the Standards themselves. Whatever influences have in one way and another led at any time to temporary departures from the catholicity of the Standards, American Presbyterians have soon returned to the correct Biblical principles of church fellowship.

Further, the Synod, while making the utterances just quoted, made them all as a preamble to the following declaration:

"Yet we are undoubtedly obliged to take care that the faith once delivered to the Saints, be kept pure and uncorrupt among us, and so handed down to our posterity."

The American Presbyterian Church, acting for itself, has exalted above all other forms of truth, the truth revealed in Holy Scripture. It holds that all truth is in order to goodness, and "that no opinion can be either more pernicious or more absurd than that which brings truth and falsehood upon a level, and represents it as of no consequence as to what a man's opinions are. On the contrary, they are persuaded that there is an inseparable connection between faith and practice, truth and duty. Otherwise it would be of no consequence either to discover truth or embrace it." It also maintains "that there are truths and forms, with respect to which men of good characters and principles may differ. And in all these they think it is the duty, both of private Christians and societies, to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other."³¹ Pres-

³¹ *Form of Gov.*, Chap. I, Secs. 4 and 5.

byterians have held, and hold strongly, to the principles which they maintain, and insist just as strongly upon the rights of others to do likewise. True liberty is ever careful of the rights of all men.

This paper makes clear that the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. was founded chiefly by Presbyterians; that the founders, whether from New England or elsewhere, were sincerely attached to Presbyterian principles of faith and polity; and that in an age when intolerance was the general rule in both Church and State, these founders vindicated in their ecclesiastical system, the right of private judgment, the principles of true religious liberty, and the independence of the Church from control by the State in things ecclesiastical. Whether of English, Scotch, Welsh or Irish origin, the founders were all men of a generous type, clear sighted, and in advance of their time. All honor to the ministers and elders of the First Presbytery and First Synod, who established the first of American Federal Republics, in loyalty to true religious liberty, and to Jesus Christ as the only head of the Church. They saw the opportunity God gave them, and established a "Free Church in a Free State."