

Though we may have come short of doing all we could and should have done, we have, nevertheless, great cause for thankfulness and encouragement. We very much doubt if any denomination, taking the same number of churches, relative in size and situation, can show a better record.

If each succeeding period of five years should enable us to show a proportionate advancement, the time is not far distant when Congregationalism in Canada, as in England and the United States, shall hold a position of which we may be proud. And why should not our progress be even greater? With abounding faith in God, loyalty to our principles, a humble use of the latent energies of intellects and hearts in our churches, and a right appreciation of our duty as stewards of God's bounty, our influence and advance would be irresistible.

COUNCILS.

The *fellowship* of Congregational Churches, as well as the fellowship of the members of a church, has ever been held by our denomination as a principle of great importance, although it has been sadly neglected, and sometimes greatly misused. Because we have had no governing body over our churches aside from the Divine Head, some have been unkind enough to call the system of Congregationalism "a roap of sand;" whereas if its true spirit is carried out, there is a bond more binding and a relation more pleasant than any system the wisest men have ever yet invented.

Fellowship implies *counsel*. No two individuals can long walk together with-

out each having occasion to speak of difficulties and trials, and ask advice one from another. And who can tell the mutual benefit thus derived through church membership? Now, the same thing applies to churches. There arise occasions when counsel is greatly needed, and when sought, given and heeded in the true spirit of fellowship, good can be the only result. Not only may it be the means of guiding in difficult ways, and lining differences, but it also brings the sister churches into greater sympathy and love.

This system of Councils is one of the earliest principles of Congregationalism. It existed previous to the advent of the Pilgrims to this continent, and they simply applied and continued the usage practised in the Old World, which usage has been continued by their descendants in the United States. In England there was a departure from this principle, which departure we inherited in Canada, but now our brethren there as well as here are inquiring earnestly for the old paths. It is a coincidence worthy of notice, that almost simultaneously the Congregational Unions of England and Wales, of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and of Ontario and Quebec, have taken steps to restore this bond of strength.

There can be no doubt but that we in Canada have suffered much for the want of this, and to meet the need, the churches have resorted for counsel to two or three of the leading pastors in the body, who have been forced into a sort of arch-Episcopal authority which they did not claim or wish. Though the results of this have generally been