

this point very strongly. 2. The time was too short for a process that would ensure a protracted discussion of phraseology. Many ministers felt this to be itself a potent reason. 3. It was thought by some to be a little ridiculous that the Congregational body could not come together without directly setting themselves at creed-making. 4. It was regarded as needless. Our faith had been "sufficiently set forth" often, and recently. Moreover, the relation of the individual churches to the local and general Associations or Conferences is that which tests their creeds and settles their status. 5. Some had a growing conviction of its unsuitableness, as being rather a Presbyterian than a Congregational method. A creed framed by the Council would, by the Council's own declaration, have no binding force on any of the churches. 6. Some persons, undoubtedly, were influenced by a desire for the appearance of catholicity. The disclaimer of sectarianism by individuals, however, was generally thought to be overdone; and many privately expressed their weariness of it, saying, "We are a denomination, or we have no business here; and this our action will certainly make us more so."

These reasons are known to have been at work; and the main consideration seemed to be—the unwillingness to undertake a difficult and wholly unnecessary task. Some, probably, would have preferred to make a new and very explicit confession of faith. But they preferred not to attempt it under the pressure, haste and limitations of the more immediate objects of the assembly. Many had decided objections to singling out *any one* previous declaration, such as that of the Boston Council. We thought it too rhetorical and incomplete, for such honour. We did not choose to erect it into a seeming standard. We did not wish to sanction the practice which we were told some churches had adopted of organizing on the "common" section of it.

Secondly. The Council did intend very summarily and very unambiguously to express in its organization the fundamental and characteristic principles of orthodox *Congregationalism as distinct from all other denominations*. If they did not intend this, two hundred and seventy-seven intelligent men singularly imposed upon themselves and each other. For, before the final action on the subject, it was stated to the Council by the Chairman of the Reporting Committee that the aim had been in the briefest mode "to indicate two things, namely: Our doctrinal basis and our historic relations." After this explicit calling of attention to the subject, and three or four deliberate readings of the section reported, it was adopted by an unhesitating and unanimous vote. One brother, indeed, rose and said he should prefer to strike out the word "our"—a very short but significant word—yet no notice whatever was taken of his suggestion.

This is what, as I understand, the Council intended. And it is what they did. They clearly defined their position without detailing their creed. The fact lies not alone in individual clauses, but runs through the Constitution. The whole document manifestly assumes and plants itself upon the well-known actual base of *Congregationalism, with its recognized methods, orderly procedures, restrictions and safeguards, as well as its whole history, earlier and later*. Upon this and *nothing else*. It is "the Congregational Churches of the United States, by Elders and Messengers assembled." The representation is to be by delegates regularly appointed in the local Congregational bodies; special meetings may be called by those bodies, and alterations suggested by them. Nothing is left loose here, as a bait for itinerants.

Furthermore, the emphatic and re-iterated assertion of the "self-government" of the "local churches" separates from Romanism, Episcopacy, Presbyterianism and Methodism, and places them wholly out of the purview of the Constitution, as explicitly as does the assertion of the absolute supremacy of the Scriptures separate from Unitarian Congregationalism (sometimes so-called) and from every other form of Rationalism or Deism.

The more strictly doctrinal paragraph is as follows:

"They agree in belief that the Holy Scriptures are the sufficient and only infallible rule of religious faith and practice; their interpretation thereof being in