

“By comparing the statistics of 1859 with those of 1863, embracing a term of four years, we find a gain of twenty-four per cent. in the number of churches having stated supplies, and a loss of nearly five per cent. in those supplied with pastors; the gain averaging six per cent. yearly, and the loss of one and one-fourth per cent.

“During the same term there has been a loss of eight per cent. in pastors, and a gain of twenty-two per cent. in stated supplies.”

“Truly, if this is the pass to which things may come, there is danger of our boasting of our Congregationalism much beyond warrant. It may be, that it is not always desirable that a pastorate should be life-long; one change, and perhaps a second, in a fairly protracted life, may be expedient, both for minister and people. It may also be, that some of these vacant churches, as among ourselves, may be small, too small to sustain an efficient pastorate. But, when every imaginable concession shall have been made, the condition of affairs which the preceding figures indicate, seems to me in a fearful degree significant of evil, and prophetic of evil. It implies a sad spiritual declension, and it must lead from bad to worse. Would we might see such a movement against it as shall promise an effectual reform. The pastoral office is assuredly of Divine institution. Virtually to prescribe it, is to condemn the authority which has given it existence. Such a sin will not fail to bring its retribution.”

#### AMERICAN AND ENGLISH CONGREGATIONALISM.

*“One point in which the Congregationalism of the United States is a more sober, and perhaps a wiser system than our own, I should not forget to mention. It eschews the name Independent. I am not sure that it is wise in doing that, but it does so for a reason. It admits that no one Congregational church has authority over another, and that so far, all Congregational churches are Independent. But when a church is disposed to elect a pastor, it is usual to ask the pastors and churches of the neighbourhood to express their opinion in ‘council’ as to the fitness of the intended proceedings. This judgment of ‘council,’ is not necessarily law; but the usage is that it should be sought, and the feeling is that much weight should be ceded to it when given. The philosophy of this custom is, that as churches should study to be at peace within themselves, so they should study to be at peace with their neighbour churches. Their institutional Independency is not to mean moral isolation, With governmental efficiency at home, it befits them to combine spiritual unity abroad. This wise policy the New England Congregationalists have received from a wise ancestry. To our American brethren I would say respectfully but earnestly—Hold to it. To our English Congregationalists I would say—Go and do likewise. But even in New England, I am told, this custom is falling into disuse.*

#### PECUNIARY LIBERALITY.

“Greatly to the credit of the American churches is the liberality with which they have sustained all their religious and benevolent institutions during their four years of war. The Congregationalists have borne their full share of this burden, and have borne it cheerfully. And, besides contriving to meet all the old demands upon them, and even going beyond the old limit, they have made large contributions special to the crisis through which they have passed. I scarcely dare trust myself to name the amount of the contributions that have been made to the Christian Commission to promote the religious interest of the army; and to the Sanitary Commission, designed to extend relief to the sick or wounded, whether friend or foe. The utter recklessness of human life and of human suffering which seemed at times to characterize the war spirit in the North, shocked many English minds inexpressibly, and the feeling thus awakened led many to express repugnance to their war policy in strong terms. But, if the whole case be duly weighed, it will be seen, that for this dread resoluteness there was a reason, and that under it there flowed a current of Christian and humane feeling, deep and steady.”