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SHALL WE HAVE A DOCTRINAL TEST?

The very able and excellent paper, by the pastor of the Kingston Church, on "Doctrinal Uniformity," which we publish in this number, was the subject of several long and very earnest discussions at the recent meeting of the Congregational Union, at which it was read. Its publication by request of that Body will not be understood as an endorsement of all the positions asserted by the writer, for the discussions to which it gave rise indicated that while in regard to its main features we were substantially at one with him, there were points in it to which strong objection was felt. With one exception perhaps, it enjoys the honorable distinction of being the "best abused" document that has been presented to the Union for years.

Not a few were of the opinion that since "the simple demand of spiritual life, and reliance on the authority of Scripture has secured a unity so satisfactory" in the past, it were better to "let well alone." Others, again, were unable to see that any additional guarantee for the orthodoxy of the Body would be afforded, if that were needed, by the new mode of examination proposed. Personal interview with ministerial candidates, might, in doubtful cases, be of some advantage, but there are probably few delegates who either could or would become sponsors, except in the most general terms, for the doctrinal and ecclesiastical sentiments of the churches which they are sent to represent;—few, perhaps, whose acquaintance with dogmatic theology would render them competent to discuss intelligently the "five points" with a membership committee. Besides, as it appears to us, the difficulty lies not so much in the *application* as in the *adoption* of a doctrinal test. We have first to agree upon the *minimum* of orthodoxy requisite for admission into the Union, and having settled that point, we shall then be prepared to discuss the best mode of enforcing the rule.

The question is without doubt a very perplexing one. On the one hand the historic faith of the Body has undeniably been Calvinistic. The creed of the vast majority of Congregationalists, both of the Baptist and Pedo-Baptist branches of the denomination, is still, as undeniably, of the same type. We