

(3) That which vests its supreme power (under God) in the hands of ALL WHO ARE INCLUDED IN THE ASSOCIATION.

The first of these is the Monarchic, or Episcopal ; the second, the Aristocratic, or Presbyterial ; and the third, the Democratic, or Congregational form of Government.

Congregationalism, as a form of Church order, derives its name from the prominence which it gives to the congregation of Christian believers. It vests all ecclesiastical power, under Christ, the only supreme head of the Church, in the associated brotherhood of each local Church as an independent body. Yet, between these independent Churches it recognizes a fraternal and equal fellowship, which invests each with the right and duty of advice, counsel, and, if the course pursued by another of the sisterhood should, for the preservation of its own purity and consistency, demand it, even the public withdrawal of that fellowship.

Herein Congregationalism proper is distinguished from that ultra type of independence which ignores any check, even of advice, upon its actions, and which is repugnant alike to the higher instincts of devout hearts and the best interests of the cause of God. Hence, though every Congregational Church is really independent, it does not follow that every independent Church is a Congregational one.

The fundamental principle of Congregationalism is, that the Bible, interpreted by sanctified common sense, with all wise helps from history, from the various departments of knowledge, and especially from the Revealing Spirit, is the one and only authoritative guide in all matters pertaining to Christian faith and practice. And that whatever the Bible teaches by direct precept, living exemplar, or legitimate inference, is imperative and binding upon all