

the development of this idea. "More power and freedom are claimed for individual churches than is acknowledged by Presbyterianism, and more authority and power granted to synods than is acknowledged by Congregationalism." "The position occupied is between Presbyterianism and Congregationalism." A slight alteration, therefore, in the mode of its development would bring this large body of believers into exact accord with the democratic idea of the church; for the unity of Christian fellowship is well developed and practised among them.

The Baptists, too, hold the same idea of the church, but generally with too strong a leaning towards an isolated independency of the local congregation. Hence with them the fellowship of the saints is not adequately exhibited, either to satisfy the natural longings of the devout heart, or to convince the world that all believers are baptized into one Name.

The same jealous shielding of their liberties from the first taint of ecclesiastical tyranny has led, also, the Congregationalists of Great Britain to suppress the proper development of Christian fellowship among the churches. They have neglected advisory councils in matters of general concern, lest, peradventure, councils called to advise might in time aspire to rule, claiming for themselves the prerogatives and powers of church judicatories. This fear is happily now yielding under the influence of a more perfect way, and advisory councils are recommended to the churches.

The Congregationalists of our own country have, however, developed in equal measure, and in perfect harmony, the two essential elements of the democratic idea of the church, in its outward manifestation, namely, self-government and the fellowship of the churches. Their circumstances were providentially favorable for the doing of this; for neither internal dissensions nor overshadowing despotism checked independency on the one hand, or fellowship on the other. Under the Providence and the Word and the Spirit of God, they have given to the world the democratic idea of the Church of Christ in its proper development.

Now, which of these three ideas of the church, intrenched as they all are in present belief and practice, is the coming church to embrace? Will it go back to the falling monarchic idea, and clothe it with machinery sufficient to govern the whole body of believers under one visible and supreme head? Will it adopt the brittle aristocratic idea, bringing all the disciples of our Lord into one universal organic whole, with church judicatories rising in imposing grandeur up to an ecumenical consistory, which in the place of the pope shall administer the ecclesiastical government of the whole world? or will the coming church be congregational? Two influences determine which idea it will adopt, and what its polity will be. These are no less potent than the spirit of the age, and the New Testament.

Some striking illustrations are then given of the spirit and tendency of the age, both in Church and State, toward "the government of the people, by the people, and for the people," which our space will not permit us to quote. This tendency alone, he thinks, would settle the polity of the coming church, and make it congregational. His main reliance, however, is upon the teachings and influence of the New Testament.

The Head of the church has not left us in the dark here, our opponents themselves being judges. We are not compelled, in the present argument, to go through the demonstration of Congregationalism from the Scriptures, and prove with irresistible force that this democratic idea is taught in the New Testament and embodied in the apostolic churches,—this has been amply done by Punchard and Dexter,—for competent historians and commentators of every denomination acknowledge that the primitive churches were congregational. In concluding a long list of these witnesses, Punchard says, "Thus, I conceive, it has been shown from the testimony of numerous and distinguished ecclesiastical historians,—none of whom except Dr. Owen were Congregationalists,—and who, consequently, were without any inducement to misunderstand or misinterpret facts in our favor,—that the leading principles and doctrines of the congregational system were de-