

taught, which the New Testament contains; which is to be transacted between the enlightened conscience and God; and which is to be received into the renewed heart, in the same exercise of faith, and at the same time, as the doctrines of salvation and the precepts of holiness. It is part of that teaching which we received from Christ as our Divine Prophet; and of that surrender which we make to him as the King of Zion; and without which we should feel that we have not received a whole Christ. This is Congregationalism, a matter of the conscience and of the closet; which we should meditate upon, and pray over, as we do other parts of our religion; which we should cherish with the fervor of a saint and hold with the grasp of a martyr."

Has there not been also a want of consistency? We have not always been true to our avowed and cherished principles. It is a time-honored custom among us, to denounce all creeds, and to maintain that the Bible is our only and sufficient standard of faith. Nevertheless, it is only to *written* creeds that we practically object, for we both have, and use, a *traditional* one. It is pretty well understood, both within and without our pale, that no minister will be very welcome or acceptable among us, unless he be, at least, a moderate Calvinist. He may possess unquestioned piety, hold evangelical sentiments, and withal be deeply enamoured of the Congregational polity; but if he cleave to the doctrinal system of John Wesley, let him not expect to find himself a home in our midst. Yet we boast largely of the freedom of thought, the liberty of discussion, and the agreement to differ, which prevail among us, while it may safely be questioned whether we have in reality more of these things than some other bodies between whom and ourselves we are fond at times of instituting invidious comparisons. Neither our Presbyterian nor our Methodist brethren, require conformity to their doctrinal standards of candidates for their fellowship, it is only of ministers that this is demanded. And, if we virtually require the endorsement of the Calvinistic system by those who become members of this Union, "what do we more than others?" The matter of doctrinal soundness could not well be left more vaguely than it is by the present constitution of our Union. "Approved character" is the only prerequisite distinctly laid down, and although "a statement of doctrinal and ecclesiastical sentiments" is expected, there is nothing indicative of what such a "statement" must be, in order to prove satisfactory.

Now, consistency demands of us one of two things; either, that we explicitly declare to the world, that we unite on the Congregational plan of polity, irrespective of doctrinal agreement, requiring only real piety and a firm holding of those fundamental truths which all evangelical bodies agree in regarding as precious; in a word, that as in the local Church, so in our Union, it is a fundamental principle with us to impose no test which may not be complied with by all sincere Christians; or else that we may lay aside our morbid aversion to creeds, and distinctly specify *how far* we regard doctrinal agreement as necessary to denominational unity.

Some say the local church is the best judge and guardian of orthodoxy, but admitting this, which, I confess I am scarcely prepared to do—admitting this for argument's sake, if a local church with its usual admixture of intelligence and ignorance, be even a *good* judge and guardian of orthodoxy, surely a body of intelligent ministers and delegates, might venture to frame some sort of judgment, and erect some sort of bulwark too. Moreover, we do not as a matter of fact, treat the local Church as reliable in this respect, for without having a definite creed, we revise its opinions and decisions, and form our own, based on "the traditions of the elders."

It is impossible for us fully to evade the charge of inconsistency in