

# SYMBOLS OF OUR WAY

BY  
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A Short List of Significant  
Congregational Statements  
1567 - 1975



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## FOREWORD

In the course of preparing seminars on Congregationalism for the First Congregational Church of Los Angeles and Pilgrim Congregational Church of Pomona, I discovered that there is no brief bibliography of landmark Congregational statements. There is, of course, an enormous amount of writing about our Way. Dr. Henry M. Dexter's monumental work *The Congregationalism of the Last Three Hundred Years, as Seen in its Literature*, published well over a century ago, has a bibliography of 7250 references. Dr. Williston Walker's *The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism*, (Hartford 1893) treats exhaustively of our basic symbols. *History of American Congregationalism* by Gaius Glenn Atkins and Frederick L. Fagley (Pilgrim Press 1942) lucidly tells of the faith and works of Congregationalists. Detailed treatments of the confessions, articles, and covenants listed in this leaflet are to be found in the three works of reference which I have named. For those who do not desire intensive study, there is a short and highly readable account of Congregational thought and deed; Dr. Atkins' *An Adventure in Liberty* is a charming and delightfully illustrated book. It is available at the National Association office at Oak Creek.

It occurred to me that a short list of major Congregational documents might be of use to C.F.T.S. students, ministers in search of fresh material for sermons on our Way, and lay people who want to know more of our strong, subtle, and Bible-based mode of Church government. Accordingly, I have compiled a list of publications of seminal and historic importance. In each case I give the title, authorship, and date (when known), a summary of its essential points, and a brief historical setting. The *Preamble* to the Articles of the National Association and *The Chislehurst Thanksgiving* were not a part of my seminar lectures. They were added to this short list at the suggestion of Professor Donald L. Bentley. (Editor's note: These two documents are both the product of Dr. Butman's pen.)

This is a deliberately abbreviated list. Since my focus is on American Congregationalism, many important English statements are omitted, the "Savoy Declaration of 1658" being one example. Omitted also are many American documents, among them being the "Reforming Synod, 1679, 1680;" "The Massachusetts Proposals of 1705" and "The Saybrook Platform of 1708."

Coming nearer to our own time, I have not included "The Constitution of the United Church of Christ" because it is a departure from historic Congregationalism. It is the instrument of a national connectional Church, and the word "Congregationalism" does not appear in its text. Perhaps arbitrarily, I have omitted the statement of the "Conservative Congregational Christian Churches" because that body is a national organization with a doctrinal creed to which all member Churches and ministers must subscribe, thus denying the autonomy of the local Church.

I am well aware of the lacks of this bibliography. It is impossible to cram 400 years of religious literature into brief compass. I am not writing for scholars. It is my hope that this brief list, despite its omissions and scholarly defects, may lead inquiring minds, however few, to a fresh appreciation and an increasing love of the all-but-forgotten riches and glories of our magnificent legacy of faith and usage. The early walkers of our Way have bequeathed to us a blood-bought and goodly heritage of words and witness. Let not their memory perish.

## SOME BASIC CONGREGATIONAL DOCUMENTS

### 1.

#### *THE COVENANT OF THE BRIDEWELL PRIVY CHURCH IN LONDON, 1567*

Some authorities say that the Plumbers' Hall Society, Richard Fitz, minister, was the first Congregational Church. Fitz and his congregation were persecuted and imprisoned in the Bridewell jail; there they wrote this covenant, short and sad. It can hardly be called Congregational, this cry from the dungeon, but it steadfastly declares that "the Gospel must be preached purely and freely," according to "the heavenly and almighty word of our good Lord, Jesus Christ;" and not according to "the filthy canon law," that is, the doctrine and practice of the Church of England.

### 2.

#### *A BOOKE WHICH SHEWETH THE LIFE AND MANNERS OF ALL TRUE CHRISTIANS AND HOWE UNLIKE THEY ARE UNTO TURKES AND PAPISTES AND HEATHEN FOLK by Robert Browne, Middleburgh, 1582*

This little book stresses the concept of covenant as the primary factor of government in a Congregational Church. Congregationalists are called Christians "Because that by a willing Covenant made with our God, we are under the government of God and Christ, and thereby do lead a godly and Christian life."

Oliver Wendell Holmes somewhere says that the covenant concept of the non-conforming English Churches strongly influenced the development of the civil contract in English law.

3.

**A TREATISE OF 'REFORMATION WITHOUT TARRYING FOR ANIE, AND OF THE WICKEDNESS OF THOSE PREACHERS WHICH WILL NOT REFORM TILL THE MAGISTRATE COMMAUNDE OR COMPELL THEM'**

by Robert Browne, Middleburgh, 1582

In this small book Browne urged immediate separation from the Church of England. His central thesis was that the civil authority—the throne—had no power over the Churches or individual Christians. This is the origin of the idea of separation of Church and state.

It should be noted that in the America of today the thrust of Browne's concept of separation has been completely reversed. Today's theory of separation is to protect the state from the Church, e.g. the prohibition of prayers in a public school. Browne's idea was to protect the Church from the state, that is, the state was prohibited from burning or hanging Church members because of their religious beliefs.

4.

**A TRUE AND SHORT DECLARATION, BOTH OF THE GATHERING AND JOYNING TOGETHER OF CERTAIN PERSONS: AND ALSO OF THE LAMENTABLE BREACH AND DIVISION WHICH FELL AMONGST THEM**

by Robert Browne, undated

This is an account of the internal struggle in Browne's Church (Norwich, England, 1580 and later at Middleburgh, Holland). It has an important sentence: Browne taught that "the kingdom of God was not to be begun by whole parishes, but rather of the worthiest. Were they never [ever] so fewe." This is the origin of our Congregational doctrine of the gathered Church, i.e. a voluntary association of Christians, not a number of people living in a particular geographical area.

Robert Browne is generally considered to be the father of modern Congregationalism, and his Church at Norwich, England, gathered in 1580, is held to be the first distinctly Congregational Church. Originally Browne was a Puritan, that is, one who believed that the Church of England could be purified of its errors. He later became a Separatist—one who believed that a full Christian life was impossible in the established Church, and that true believers must separate from it and unite among themselves. The three little tracts mentioned above

greatly influenced the Separatist Churches. It is possible that his stresses and disappointments affected his mind in later life. Although he became reconciled to the establishment and recanted his seminal democratic ideas, they live on in today's Congregationalism. I quote his lengthy titles in full because they give the flavor of early Congregational polemic writing.

5.

**THE LONDON CONFESSION OF 1589  
A TRUE DESCRIPTION OUT OF THE WORD OF GOD OF THE  
VISIBLE CHURCH**

Dort, 1589

This symbol is an ideal sketch of a Church, not based on ecclesiastical experience. Its principles are backed by innumerable texts. It proclaims the Biblical basis of Congregationalism. It was written by two Congregational martyrs, Henry Barrowe, a lawyer, and John Greenwood, teacher of the London Church, during their imprisonment in Fleet prison awaiting execution.

6.

**THE PREFACE TO "THE CONFESSION OF 1596"**

(The full title of the Confession is too long to cite. It was printed in Amsterdam.)

The London Separatists, harshly persecuted in England, fled to Holland, and in 1595 gathered a Church with stormy Francis Johnson as minister, and scholarly Henry Ainsworth as teacher. The *Confession* itself is a clear and reasoned statement of developing Congregational doctrine and polity.

The *Preface* however, is not exposition, but narrative; it is a thing of rage, not reason. It chronicles the general persecution of the Separatists in England, including the execution of John Penry, the Welsh martyr. In particular, it vividly relates the cruel deaths of 24 Congregationalists of humble station in the prisons of London. A footnote tells of poor old men and women, most of them in their 60's and 70's, flung without trial into the Clink, Fleet, and Newgate jails; how they coughed their tubercular lungs out, and, as the hour of death drew near, were dragged out to die on the sidewalks, thus sparing the jail or the Church the cost and trouble of burial. The *Preface* is a cry in

the night, a yell of fury at the savage bishops of the Church of England who judicially murdered Christian men and women for the high crime of Congregationalism. The *Preface to the Confession of 1596* is an enduring witness to the great cost of our present spiritual liberty. These humble, forgotten folk died for their faith as truly as Jesus died for His.

## 7.

### THE SEVEN ARTICLES OF 1617

This declaration of the Scrooby-Leiden-Plymouth Church (the Pilgrims) was a fruitless attempt to gain the favor of hostile King James I. It was written by John Robinson, Pastor, and William Brewster. It acknowledges the authority of the throne in certain ecclesiastical matters, and it represents a significant departure from Robert Browne's position. It never reached James, and its failure led to the decision of the Pilgrims to migrate to America.

## 8.

### THE MAYFLOWER COMPACT OF 1620

With modernized spelling, the body of the *Compact* reads: [Forty-one men] Having undertaken, for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith and honor of our king and country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the Northern parts of Virginia: Do by these presents solemn and mutually in the presence of God, and one of another; covenant, and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic; for our better ordering and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue thereof enact, constitute, and frame such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the Colony; unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.

This instrument was written on board the "Mayflower" on November 11, 1620. The original manuscript has been lost, and the authorship cannot be determined. It was signed by both "Saints"—Church members—and "Strangers"—non-Church members. The Compact was occasioned by a pressing and dangerous problem. The Strangers declared that since their patent was for Virginia, the Pilgrim's leaders had no authority to govern in New England, and that once ashore, the Strangers would do as they pleased. Before disembarking, the Pilgrim Fathers drew up a plan of government and wisely granted the privilege of co-signing, thus saving the plantation from instant anarchy.

*The Mayflower Compact* is not a creed; it is a secular political instrument, and one of the world's major innovative declarations of government. It is astonishingly brief; it says its mighty message in 158 words. In it, the Congregational concept, "Democracy is Christ's government, both in Church and state" is put into workable political form. In a little more than a century-and-a-half such mighty branches as the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States sprang from its rootage. *The Mayflower Compact* is one of Congregationalism's great gifts to America.

(Those who wish to learn more about the Pilgrims and the Compact may read the first 100 pages of William Bradford's immortal story, *Of Plimoth Plantation*. Samuel Elliot Morrison's edition in modern speech [Alfred A. Knoff, 1979] is the best book for this purpose.)

## 9.

### THE SALEM COVENANT OF 1629

We covenant with the Lord and one with another : and doe bynd our selves in the presence of God, to walke together in all his waies, according as he is pleased to reveale himselfe unto us in his blessed word of truth.

The early records of the Salem Church are scanty, controversial and mutilated, but the Covenant of 1629 is a salvaged jewel. The original manuscript is lost and the authorship unknown. It is probably an echo of the Scrooby Covenant (1602-1608) with the enhancement of a reference to the Bible. In contrast to the length and complexity of later Congregational creeds and platforms, it consists of but a single sentence. The Salem Covenant of 1629 has a lyric silver note of simplicity that has kept it alive to this very day. It is an early Congregational symbol worthy of quotation in its entirety.

## 10.

### HOOKER'S PRINCIPLES OF 1645

The ascendancy of Presbyterianism in England and Scotland at this time had a powerful effect on the New England colonies, where many influential ministers were of Presbyterian sympathies. The "Principles"—a short statement of barely two printed pages—was a strong, concise statement of Congregationalism which declared that the

power of the local Church was superior to that of ministers and synods. The "Principles" were approved by the ministers of the river towns in Connecticut, and many ministers in Massachusetts. They are foundation stones of American Congregationalism. (It is interesting to note that the first wave of western migration in America took place in the summer of 1636, when Thomas Hooker led the whole congregation of his Watertown, Massachusetts, Church through the wilderness to Hartford.)

## 11.

*THE CAMBRIDGE PLATFORM 1646-1648*  
Printed in Cambridge 1649

While the Cambridge Platform is the most important document of early American Congregationalism, it is unreadable today except by specialized scholars. It is a ponderous and thorny document. The "Preface" alone has nine crowded pages, and the "Platform" itself has thirty-five pages of tightly reasoned argument; it has its own vast bibliography. The "Platform" was preceded by long harsh controversy, and it took the best ministerial minds and the most powerful political figures of the Colonies more than two years of fierce debate to complete it. Its political and ecclesiastical background was the turbulence in England, where King and Parliament were locked in lethal strife; where Scottish Presbyterianism clashed with English Independency, and where the defeat of the Presbyterians by Congregationalist Oliver Cromwell at the battle of Preston altered the final result of the Synod in distant Cambridge. The "Platform" dealt with big issues—the nature of Church government, the relation of Church and state, the power of councils over the local Church, and the right of non-Church members to vote in civic affairs.

Congregationalists of today would not agree with many findings of the Cambridge Synod, which itself was a religious assembly called by the Civil legislature. The "Platform" does not stress the democratic principle of Congregationalism. It urges the civil authorities to interfere with Church matters of doctrine and polity. It declares that Congregationalism is of exclusively Divine origin. But it also clearly affirms the permanent essentials of Congregationalism—the autonomy of the local Church and the dependence of the Churches on each other, that is, fellowship. For nearly a century-and-a-half it was the legally recognized standard of Congregationalism. But it should be recognized that the Cambridge Platform reflects the semi-Presbyterianism of Henry Barrowe rather than the Congregationalism of Robert Browne.

(And it should be realized that in historic Congregationalism there have been times and places in which local Churches have been subjected to conformity of creed and usage by instruments framed by synods of magistrates and ministers. The Cambridge Platform is an example of conformity forced upon the local Church from without. For the record, however, it should be clearly understood that the Congregational Churches which resisted the merger with the Evangelical and Reformed Church, took the issue into the civil courts in the case of *Cadman v. Kenyon*, and formed the National Association at the Hotel Fort Shelby, emphatically opposed any ecclesiastical control over the local Church by bodies superior to, or exterior to, the local Church. They unequivocally declared that in matters of doctrine and usage the autonomous local Church was subject only to its covenant which every member freely accepts.)

(Early American Congregationalism was sometimes a savage business. Eccentric Roger Williams and feminist Anne Hutchinson were banished into the wilderness with winter coming on because of their dissident views. Men and women of that day took their religion with a seriousness we tamer moderns find hard to understand. But we must remember that these early Congregationalists, both the humble Separatists of Plymouth and the more powerful and influential Puritans of Boston, had left home, comfort, and safety, and had come to a hostile foreign strand for the right to walk the Congregational Way as they saw it. For them religion was no matter of an hour on Sunday; it was a desperately serious business, the be-all of life, both in this world and the next.)

## 12.

*THE HALF WAY COVENANT DECISIONS OF 1657 AND 1662*

The next great controversy in Congregationalism was over doctrine, not polity. It dealt with the right of children to baptism. The earliest Congregationalists held that a person could not be a Church member without a personal experience of Christ. The first generation usually had that, and since the children of the father were considered within the covenant, the problem did not arise until the third generation. By that time, there was a large number of people of good character, who were sound in doctrine and regular in attendance, but who lacked a personal religious experience. Could their children be baptized? A very early solution was to say that a believing grandparent could bestow the right. About this point of infant baptism a time of controversy arose which for complexity, intensity, number of meetings, and volume of

bibliography, puts the Cambridge Platform debate to shame. One who wishes to get a sense of the length and fervor of the "Half Way Covenant" struggle, should read the 101 pages which Walker's *Creeds and Platforms* devotes to this controversy, which lasted for 156 years from its inception in Dorchester to its final phase in Charlestown in 1780. During these years the old, strict standards of infant baptism were eased. In our secular day such a matter is considered a senseless spinning of theological cobwebs. But it dealt with the spiritual health and salvation of their children, and the Congregationalists of yesterday were agonizingly in earnest about that.

## 13.

*THE PLAN OF UNION, 1801*  
*THE ALBANY CONVENTION, 1852*

The Plan of Union was a well-meant ecumenical effort which became a Congregational disaster. Briefly and crudely said, the Connecticut General Association and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church agreed upon a plan of missionary enterprise which gave the country west of the Hudson River to the Presbyterians while New England remained Congregational territory. In 1801 the west was a malarial, Indian-haunted wasteland. The Presbyterians boldly bet on the West and won much. The Plan of Union resulted in great gain for the Presbyterians: Dissenting Congregationalists bitterly complained, "They have milked our Congregational cows and made Presbyterian butter and cheese."

As a result of strong and widespread dissatisfaction among Congregationalists concerning the Plan of Union, in 1852 a large convention of Congregational Churches was held in Albany, New York. It was the first national gathering of Congregational Churches in over two hundred years. It abrogated the Plan of Union and after a half-century halt, Congregationalism resumed its westward march.

(A detailed account of the whole matter may be found in Walker's *Creeds and Platforms*, pp 524-541 and Atkins and Fagley *History of Congregationalism*, pp 142-148.)

## 14.

*THE UNITARIAN DEPARTURE*

During the post-Revolutionary period, there was a radical change in the theological climate of New England Congregationalism. Many ministers and lay people began to reject the rigid Calvinism and high

Christology of the Savoy Declaration, a rejection that led to schism. While there is no single manifesto by which to date the long-debated Unitarian Departure, the capture of the Boston liberals of the Hollis Chair of Divinity at Harvard in 1805, the legal Dedham Decision of 1820, which financially favored the liberal parish organizations, and Channing's Baltimore sermon of 1819 are events which led to the formation of the American Unitarian Association of 1825. The result was a catastrophe for American historic Congregationalism—20 of its 25 oldest Churches went, including Plymouth, and 10 of the 11 Boston Churches. The breach has never been healed.

## 15.

*THE BURIAL HILL DECLARATION OF FAITH: and*  
*THE STATEMENT OF THE PRINCIPLES OF POLITY, 1865*

The "Declaration" was written by The Rev. Alonzo Quint, June 22, 1865, and the "Principles of Polity" by a committee, June 23, 1866.

The westward expansion of Congregationalism after the Albany Convention of 1852 demonstrated the need for a national body of Congregational Churches. Accordingly, after much consultation, a provisional National Council assembled in Boston, June 14, 1865.

The Council addressed two major questions—what do American Congregationalists believe; and, what is their mode of government? The debate on the point of a national confession of faith was long and sometimes acrimonious, and it was still unsettled when the council adjourned to a special session in Plymouth, on Burial Hill where Pilgrim dust reposed. Rev. Alonzo Quint wrote the "Declaration" on a train to Plymouth, using his hat as a desk. The "Declaration" affirmed that Congregationalism had no rule of faith but the word of God, but for "substance of doctrine" accepted the Cambridge Platform of 1648, and the Confession of 1680. It also recognized the unity of Christ's Church. In a dramatic historical setting, the "Declaration" was approved with two dissenting votes.

The "Statement of Congregational Principles" was the work of a committee of influential pastors, laymen, and professors. It affirmed the autonomy of the local Church, the communion (fellowship) of the Churches, and limited the powers of ministers. While the findings of the Boston Council of 1869 had little popular impact, the Council prepared the way for an important event—the establishment of a

permanent national Congregational body. The "National Council of the Congregational Churches of the United States of America" was formed in Oberlin, November 15-21, 1871.

## 16.

**ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION***National Association of Congregational Christian Churches of the United States**Preamble*

by Harry R. Butman

*(This Preamble was written before the present concern for inclusive language. Because it is an historic document its wording has been left unchanged.)*

WHEREAS Churches of the congregational order have historically held to certain truths, chief among which are the freedom of the Christian man maintained at all costs and all hazards; the right of the local Church to self-government in all matters temporal and spiritual, because of Christ's word that where two or three are gathered together in His name He is in their midst; the fellowship of Churches in the spirit of love, without compulsion or restraint and free from the bondage of creed or ecclesiastical control, and,

WHEREAS the congregational way is one of the great outer and corporate expressions of the inner and individual life, and,

WHEREAS the needs of our time demand that these timeless principles be revived and given national, as well as local, expression, and,

WHEREAS the advance in transportation and communication is such that Churches a continent apart are now as near together as the contiguous Churches of yesterday, and,

WHEREAS it is desirable that Congregational Christian Churches have an organization embracing the entire nation, of which the members shall be Churches, and through which they may take counsel and may realize their common purposes, and advance God's Kingdom:

WHEREAS Churches by delegates assembled in Detroit, Michigan, on November 9 and 10, 1955, first organized and elected temporary officers of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches;

THEREFORE WE, the Churches by our delegates here assembled in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin this 25th day of October, 1956, do covenant in this National Association of Congregational Christian Churches to walk together in the ways which God anciently revealed to our fathers, and in such further ways as He may yet reveal to us, the present form and purposes being hereinafter stated. Amen.

"The Declaration on Unity of the Church," adopted by the Council of 1871, over the years led to a number of mergers with other denominations. Most important of these was the union with the General Convention of the Christian Church in Seattle in 1931. Early in the 1940's, officials of the General Council of Congregational Christian Churches proposed a merger with the Evangelical and Reformed Church. In the minds of many, the terms of this merger struck at the independence and autonomy of the local Church by making it a subordinate part of a unitary national Church which possessed a measure of overhead control. A long and increasingly bitter controversy ensued, fought both in ecclesiastical gatherings and in the courts of the land.

It is impossible to tell briefly of nearly a decade of strife. Those who wish to study the merger battle in its sad particulars may consult the mass of data available in the Founders' Library in Oak Creek. Among the accounts of the merger are such books as *Destiny for Congregationalism* and *Disorders in the Kingdom* (M. K. Burton), *The Mediators* (H. D. Gray), and *The Lord's Free People* (H. R. Butman).

It is enough to say that a meeting was held at Detroit, November 9-10, 1955, attended by delegates from 102 Churches, determined to honor their Congregational tradition of freedom. At Hotel Fort Shelby 219 persons from 24 states representing 149 Churches in some manner brought the National Association into being. A "Preamble" stating the historic Congregational principles and usages, and declaring the need for an organization to ensure their continuance, was adopted without debate. A name was chosen, and Articles of Association were approved. These actions were ratified at Wauwatosa on October 25, 1956 and the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches of the United States was born.

This bold and necessary action by the faithful minority made certain that the historic Congregational idea of the autonomy of the local Church under the Headship of Christ, and the fellowship of the



Churches, would not sink into ecclesiastical oblivion in our time, nor the hallowed name of Congregationalism cease to be spoken. We of the National Association are the custodians of the Pilgrim Heritage. Before us lies the good work of the continuation and extension of our Way.

## 17.

*THE CHISLEHURST THANKSGIVING*

by Harry R. Butman

From the far places of the world, from the east and from the west, we have walked the Congregational Way to this meeting under the favor of Almighty God and by the leading of the Holy Spirit, to reaffirm our allegiance to Christ as faithful coworkers with Him according to the Word of God, and in reliance on His sure promise that He is with us in our gathering.

Although stress and strain and schism across the years have brought us to this place and day, we come not in sadness or in rancor, but with a strong and sober joy that we are accounted worthy to witness to the Way our fathers walked, and which, through the mercy of God, the Headship of Christ, and the communion of the Spirit, our children may travel after us in the generations to come. We have eaten our bread, and held discourse with delight and one sound of heart, because God is today renewing His people as He has ever done.

We would not boldly presume to say that our declarations are binding upon the Churches, or upon the conscience of any Christian, nor dare we give our words the solemn force of a covenant. These are but some of the things centrally confessed by us in this hour of expectation, and they are said out of grateful hearts.

## I.

We believe that the controlling truth of the Congregational Way is that Jesus is Lord; Great Head of His Church, both in its dear and local gatherings and in the awesome and eternal sweep of the Church Universal. Though we extol and defend the wholeness and completeness of each gathered local Church as our distinctive and cherished witness, we do not narrowly deny the validity of other Church orders, nor esteem them to be ways of darkness. "The lamps are many; the Light is One."

## II.

We believe that independent local Congregational Churches should be joined in Fellowship—a free relation of affection. Ours is a brotherhood, a *koinonia*, a sharing which reaches out beyond those known and seen in a sense of mission to those whom "having not seen, we love" in the bonds of Christ.

Therefore we depart with thanksgiving from this place to which we came in quest and concern, rejoicing that God, by His power, and the promptings of the Spirit, has brought us to this fresh experience of Christ, and is sending us forth in a simple discipleship in which complexities are reconciled, to be steadfast witnesses to His Kingdom and His Church in all the world. In gratitude and testimony on this 13th day of May, 1975, we hereby set our hands, looking forward in hope to continuing our work and witness as the International Congregational Fellowship. In the name of God. *Amen*.

The global dimension of Congregationalism was recognized by the formation of the International Congregational Council, which held its first meeting in London in 1891. Meetings were held at irregular intervals until the International Congregational Council went out of existence at Nairobi, Kenya, in 1970 by joining the World Alliance of Reformed Churches holding to the Presbyterian order.

In 1962 the National Association, in a spirit of fellowship, made application for membership in the International Congregational Council, but was rejected at Rotterdam. In England in 1972, the establishment of the United Reformed Church—the English equivalent of the American United Church of Christ—led to the formation, on October 14, 1972, of the Congregational Federation of England, a body which stands in the tradition of true Congregationalism.

On May 11-14, 1975, twenty-five people from six countries met at Chislehurst, Kent, England, to consider the feasibility of an international body for Congregationalism. The group chose a name—the International Congregational Fellowship, and on the evening of May 13, 1975, after a solemn service of communion, unanimously signed the Chislehurst Thanksgiving. Two years later, July 11-16, 1977, over 800 Congregationalists from 10 countries, met for the first Conference of the International Fellowship. The meeting was featured by the celebration of the Lord's Supper according to

Congregational usage, the first such service to be held in Westminster Abbey since the days of Oliver Cromwell. Since 1977 quadrennial conferences have been held in Bangor, Wales (1981), Beverly, Massachusetts (1985), Leiden, Holland (1989), and Pomona, California (1993). The Pomona Conference had a record attendance of messengers from 21 countries.

From humble beginnings in Norwich in 1580 and Plymouth in 1620, down to the present day, Congregationalism has borne constant witness to "the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." The Congregational Federation in England, the Union of Welsh Independents in Wales, the National Association in the United States, and the International Congregational Fellowship with its global parish, are vital organizational witnesses to the fact that the Congregational Way is still being walked locally, nationally, and in the wide world.

## EPILOGUE

Congregationalism, as Gaius Glenn Atkins has lucidly said, is an adventure in liberty. The adventurers who conceived the symbols listed in this booklet, and lived and dared by them, have left us an inheritance, gained at cost, which must be preserved by unceasing vigilance. On Burial Hill stands the monument of William Bradford, singer of the Pilgrim saga and long the governor of Plymouth Plantation. On its base is carved a noble Latin epitaph which Congregationalists of now and tomorrow must never forget:

**QUA PATRES DIFFICILLIME ADEPTISUNT  
NOLITE TURPITER RELINQUERE.**

Let us not basely relinquish that which the fathers have with difficulty obtained.

## ADDITIONAL READING

Treatments of symbols not included on this short list, together with more materials on the documents mentioned, may be found in two authoritative volumes.

The first is *History of American Congregationalism* by Gaius Glenn Atkins and Frederick L. Fagley, Pilgrim Press, 1942.

The Kansas City Creed (1913) may be found on pp 402-405.

An excellent and comprehensive bibliography of Congregational books and periodicals may be found on pp 411-416.

The second key volume is *The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism* by Williston Walker. The edition cited here was published in paperback by Pilgrim Press (1960).

*Creeds and Platforms* contains the following symbols not included in this brochure.

The London Confession of 1589 (pp 28-32).

A True Description out of the Word of God of the Visible Church (pp 33-48).

The Confession of 1596 (pp 49-73).

The Points of Difference (pp 75-81).

The Enlarged Salem Covenant of 1636 (pp 116-118).

The Direction of 1665 (pp 119-122).

The Charlestown-Boston Covenant of 1630 (pp 124-131).

The Windsor Creed-Covenant, 1647 (pp 149-1967).

The Savoy Declaration, 1655 (a highly important statement of English Congregationalism) (pp 340-408).

The "Reforming Synod" of 1679 and 1680 (pp 409-439).

The Heads of Agreement of 1691 (pp 455-462).

The Proposals of 1705 and the Saybrook Platform of 1708 (pp 463-529).

Text of the Plan of Union of 1801 (pp 530-531).

The English Declaration of 1833 (pp 548-552).

The Constitution of the National Council and the "Oberlin Declaration" on the Unity of the Church (pp 572-576).

The Creed of 1883 (pp 580-582).

Both "Walker" and "Atkins and Fagley" are available to ministers at:  
The Congregational Library  
14 Beacon Street  
Boston, MA 02108

Dr. Harold F. Worthley, Librarian, says that a rebound copy of Dr. H. M. Dexter's *The Congregationalism of the Last Three Hundred Years, as Seen in its Literature*, with its famous bibliography, is also available by mail to serious students of our Way.

An examination of the interminable bibliographies in these three volumes will make it very clear that this booklet is truly "a short list."