

**PROCEEDINGS OF A  
COUNCIL  
OF CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCHES**

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Proceedings of a Council of Congregational Churches by Various

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**VARIOUS**

**PROCEEDINGS OF A  
COUNCIL  
OF CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCHES**



Proceedings of the Council  
of the Church of the Puritans, New York.

(129)

# PROCEEDINGS

OF A

## Council

OF

# CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES,

RELATIVE TO THE PRIVILEGES OF MEMBERS OF THE

CHURCH OF THE PURITANS,

NEW YORK.

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## PROCEEDINGS.

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AN *ex parte* Ecclesiastical Council of Congregational Churches, called by O. E. WOOD, E. M. KINGSLEY, J. K. JOHNSON, R. N. HAVENS, and E. C. WILCOX, in behalf of themselves and seventeen others, was convened in the University Building, in the city of New York, on Tuesday, February 15th, 1859, to consider and act upon questions growing out of their relations to the CHURCH OF THE PURITANS, in this city.

The Council assembled at 3 o'clock P. M. REV. DR. HAWES, of Hartford, Conn., called it to order, and on his motion, REV. S. G. BUCKINGHAM, of Springfield, Mass., was chosen Scribe. On motion of DR. HAWES, the Council then proceeded to elect a Moderator. On the second ballot it was announced by the Scribe that the Rev. WILLIAM T. DWIGHT, D. D., of Portland, Maine, was chosen.

THE MODERATOR took the chair, and opened the proceedings by prayer.

By direction of the MODERATOR, the Scribe now read the letter convening the Council, a copy of which was sent to each church invited, and which is as follows:

NEW YORK, January 26, 1859.

To the South Congregational Church, Springfield, Mass.:

CHRISTIAN FRIENDS: The letter, a copy of which is communicated herewith, was addressed by us, under its date, to the Church of the Puritans in this city. The proposition which it contains for a Mutual Council having been rejected by that church, we now accordingly invite you to be present, by pastor and delegate, at the small chapel of the University in this city, Tuesday, the 15th of February next, at 3 o'clock P. M., to unite with the other churches invited, in an *ex parte council*, to consider the questions therein presented, and to take such action in the premises as may be deemed proper.

Your brethren in Christ,

O. E. WOOD;  
E. M. KINGSLEY,  
J. K. JOHNSON,  
R. N. HAVENS,  
E. C. WILCOX,

for themselves, and at the request and in behalf of the following brethren,

viz: Henry A. Hurlbut, Jared Linsly, M. D., Albert Chesebro, L. N. Cowley, Richard Brown, A. T. Dwight, F. E. Mather, E. J. Owen, William Way, Stephen Paul, J. Walter Camp, S. Conover, Jr., Samuel Churchill, E. M. Mergan, Elisha Peck, W. B. Isham and W. S. Thomson.

The following is the letter alluded to in the above communication:

NEW YORK, December 27, 1858.

*To the Church of the Puritans:*

The undersigned, members of the Church of the Puritans, in regular standing, having applied for letters of dismission and recommendation to other churches, and having been offered, by a formal vote of the church, letters not in the usual or customary form, which letters were for this reason not satisfactory, and were returned under protest; and furthermore, the church, having at the same time declared, by resolution, that we are "deemed no longer members of the same or in any way subject to its watch and care:"

Now, therefore, for ourselves, and in behalf of others in the same relation, for the purpose of ascertaining what are the respective rights and duties of the parties in the premises, and for the promotion of Christian order, we propose that the church unite with us without delay in submitting to a mutual council the following questions for decision:

*First.* Are or are not the applicants, by the terms of the Church Manual, and in accordance with the practice of sister churches, entitled to the full and "customary letters," and such as have been used since the foundation of the church?

*Second.* Is or is it not a violation of the rules of the church, of the rights of Christian brethren, and contrary to the usages of our churches, summarily to cut us off from its "watch and care" and the privileges of membership, with objectionable letters, and without specified charges (if any) and formal trial, as is done by the resolution above referred to?

Signed,

O. E. WOOD,  
E. M. KINGSLEY,  
J. K. JOHNSON,  
E. C. WILCOX.

The following are the names of the churches invited, together with those of the Pastors and Delegates; all the churches invited being represented, except Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, Pastor:

THE CHURCH OF THE PILGRIMS, Brooklyn, N. Y.—Rev. R. S. Storrs, D. D., Pastor; Bro. R. P. Buck, Delegate.

THE CLINTON AVENUE CHURCH, Brooklyn, N. Y.—Rev. W. J. Budington, D. D., Pastor; Bro. A. S. Barnes, Delegate.

THE SOUTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, Brooklyn, N. Y.—Rev. R. W. Clark, D. D., Pastor; Bro. C. P. Baldwin, Delegate.

THE BROADWAY TABERNACLE, New York city.—Rev. J. P. Thompson, D. D., Pastor; Bro. Austin Abbott, Delegate.

THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, Albany, N. Y.—Rev. Ray Palmer, D. D., Pastor; Bro. H. T. McCall, Delegate.

THE THIRD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, New Haven, Conn.—Bro. J. A. Davenport, Delegate.

THE FIRST CHURCH, New Haven, Conn.—Rev. L. Bacon, D. D., Pastor; Dea. C. S. Lyman, Delegate.

THE FIRST CHURCH, Hartford, Conn.—Rev. J. Hawes, D. D., Pastor; Bro. Samuel Ward, Delegate.

THE SECOND CHURCH, Greenwich, Conn.—Deacon Jonas Mead, Delegate.

THE FIRST CHURCH, Westfield, Mass.—Rev. E. Davis, D. D., Pastor; Bro. B. Gillett, Delegate.

THE MOUNT VERNON CHURCH, Boston, Mass.—Dea. J. A. Palmer, Delegate.

THE CENTRAL CHURCH, Providence, R. I.—Rev. L. Swain, D. D., Pastor; Bro. J. Kingsbury, Delegate.

THE THIRD CHURCH, Portland, Me.—Rev. W. T. Dwight, D. D., Pastor; Dea. Joseph Libbey, Delegate.

THE SOUTH CHURCH, Springfield, Mass.—Rev. S. G. Buckingham, Pastor; Bro. R. A. Chapman, Delegate.

MODERATOR—This Council, brethren, is now organized. It is called *ex parte*. The brethren who have called it I presume are present, and are ready to present their case before us. It may be proper for me to suggest that the custom in the part of the country from which I come, (Portland, Maine,) in the case of an *ex parte* Council, is, at the earliest moment, to apprise the Church with which the individuals calling the Council have been or are connected, that it is organized, and willing to receive communications from them, if they see fit to present themselves. But if this should be now deemed not expedient as the first step, the brethren of the Council will suggest others, if they see any that are preferable.

Some informal conversation here ensued, on the point suggested by the Moderator; in the course of which Mr. O. E. Wood said: "The gentlemen who have called this Council have taken steps to inform the Church of their intentions, and have addressed them the following letter;" which, with consent of Council, he read:

NEW YORK, February 12, 1850.

To the Church of the Puritans, New York:

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,—In accordance with the usage of Congregational Churches, we hereby notify you that by Letters Missive—a copy of which for your information we subjoin—we have invited the Churches therein named, by Pastor and Delegate, to meet in Council *ex parte*, on Tuesday, the 15th day of February instant, at the Chapel of the New York University, to consider the matters submitted to you in our letter of December 27, 1848, and your action hereon, and to afford us such measures of relief as shall be in accordance with their views of duty and right, and as they shall be competent to administer.



For ourselves, and by order and in behalf of Henry A. Harbut, Jared Linsly, M. D., Albert Chesbro, L. N. Cowley, Richard Brown, A. T. Dwight, F. E. Mather, E. J. Owen, William Way, Stephen Paul, J. Walter Camp, S. Conover, Jr., Samuel Churchill, Edward M. Morgan, Elisha Peck, W. B. Isham, and W. S. Thomson.

Signed by

E. M. KINGSLEY,  
O. E. WOOD,  
R. N. HAVENS,  
J. K. JOHNSON,  
E. C. WILCOX.

Mr. Wood continued: That letter, sir, was addressed to the Church of the Puritans, and we believe it was presented to one of the officers of that church. We have had no response.

The conversation was resumed in relation to the propriety, as suggested by the Moderator, of notifying the church of the assembling of the Council; pending which, Professor Noah Porter, D. D., of Yale College, New Haven, was authorized to appear and act as counsel, in behalf of the brethren, appellants.

Subsequently, on a suggestion by a member, that the Church should be invited to unite with the appellants and make this a Mutual Council for the adjustment of the matters submitted, Professor Porter made the following remarks explanatory of the position of the brethren in whose behalf he appeared:—Mr. Moderator, I beg leave to suggest that there are two parties concerned, and if this is to be a Mutual Council, of course each party is to be represented. For the sake of expediting matters, it may be as well for me to state the views which the party that I represent take of these transactions. For, if the Church of the Puritans is to be admitted, it might be quite material that our views should be distinctly presented at the outset. One reason why these parties have been driven to the necessity of calling an *ex parte* Council is, that their repeated propositions for the submission of the whole affair to a Mutual Council were declined. In every instance in which these brethren have had communication with the Church of the Puritans, on any subject-matter growing out of their first movement in April, 1857, they have put themselves in the attitude of being ready to meet the Church in Mutual Council. They also were careful to notify the Church before the last Sabbath, that this Council would assemble here at this time, in order that they might conduct themselves accordingly. Let me then state what their views will be if a Mutual Council should be

proposed to the Church, and acceded to by them. The appellants are willing to submit the case, upon which this Council have been called to act, as presented in the letter read by Mr. Wood, provided that the other party will agree to unite with this body and abide by the decision of the Council. They are willing, as they have been from the first, if the other party desire, and if this *ex parte* Council advise them, to go into the whole matter of difference from the beginning, and have it here investigated. They do not seek such a trial, but having asked in vain for months and years for a Mutual Council, they decided at last, for the sake of peace, to allow the matters that have occurred in the past to be buried, on condition that they should receive regular dismissal from the Church. That request has been denied. It is in relation to the denial of this request that they have called this Council. It is that you may decide whether that was a proper request—whether they were entitled, under the circumstances, to receive the usual Christian dismissal. And this is the case and the only case now presented before this *ex parte* Council. If, therefore, any communication is to be had with the Church of the Puritans in respect to information which they are to give, or in respect to any Mutual Council in which they may unite, we wish it now to be understood that this is the case which is to be tried; and we are not prepared to unite with them in a Mutual Council to try the case unless they are willing to abide by the decision to which the Council, after full deliberation, shall arrive touching this simple question of dismissal. That is the case to be tried, and the only case, unless, indeed, this Council may advise us to unite with the other parties in a trial of the whole matter. We are not prepared ourselves at this late stage of the proceedings to take that responsibility, after this long-continued acrimonious controversy; but if this Council so advise us we shall not shrink from the investigation.

The remainder of the session was occupied in an informal and conversational discussion on the suggestions of the Moderator; the points chiefly urged being: First, that christian courtesy requires that the church be notified of the assembling of the Council, and that they have the opportunity given them of uniting with the appellants, and making this a Mutual Council for the consideration of the matters contained in the Letters Missive; and, Second, if the Church decline this proffer, that then they be invited by a Committee or otherwise, to furnish the Council with such facts as may aid

them in coming to an intelligent and equitable result, in their investigations—but without opening the door to argument and discussion by parties not recognizing their jurisdiction.

In view of these considerations, which were urged by different members, as conforming both to the usage of Congregational Churches, and the dictates of common justice, the following Resolutions, after various modifications, were unanimously adopted :

*Resolved*, That a committee of three be appointed to notify the Church of the Puritans that this Council is now in session, and to invite said Church to accept this as a Mutual Council for the consideration of the matters presented in the Letters Missive, by which we have been convened.

*Resolved*, That in case this invitation be declined, the Church be invited to appear before the Council by a committee to present their statement concerning the matter submitted to us."

THE MODERATOR being requested to appoint the committee, designated DR. CLARK, DR. PALMER, and DEACON JOSEPH LIBBEY.

The Council then adjourned till 8 o'clock in the evening.

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#### EVENING SESSION.

At 8 o'clock P. M. the Council met in the large Chapel of the University, where its subsequent sessions were held.

The MODERATOR having called the Council to order, inquired if the Committee appointed in the afternoon to wait upon the Church of the Puritans, were ready to report.

DR. CLARK (Chairman of the Committee)—We called upon DR. CHEEVER, Pastor of the Church of the Puritans, and presented the resolutions to him. After conferring with him, we went and presented them to the Church then assembled in business meeting, accompanying the resolutions with a verbal statement that the Council would meet at 8 o'clock to proceed with their business, and that we would be happy to have them respond to the resolutions presented to them. It was understood, through DR. CHEEVER, that they would respond or take some action.

MODERATOR—The Council will direct what shall be done. You have heard the report from the Committee. Of course it is uncertain what action the Church of the Puritans will take, or when we will hear from them.