

**A VIEW OF CONGREGATIONALISM, ITS
PRINCIPLES AND DOCTRINES: THE
TESTIMONY OF ECCLESIASTICAL
HISTORY IN ITS FAVOR, ITS PRACTICE
AND ITS ADVANTAGES. FOURTH
EDITION, REVISED AND ENLARGED**

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GEORGE PUNCHARD & R. S. STORES

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TESTIMONY OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY IN ITS FAVOR,
ITS PRACTICE, AND ITS ADVANTAGES.

BY

GEO. PUNCHARD.

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

BY R. S. STORRS, D.D.

FOURTH EDITION, REVISED AND ENLARGED.

BOSTON:
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1860.

TO

JOHN PUNCHARD, ESQ.,

SALEM, MASS,

MY AGED AND REVERED PARENT,

WHOSE INSTRUCTIONS AND EXAMPLE FIRST TAUGHT ME THE VALUE
OF THE SYSTEM HERE ADVOCATED--THESE PAGES ARE
RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY

DEDICATED.

(H)

PREFACE

TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THIS work is designed to answer the inquiry, **WHAT IS CONGREGATIONALISM — IN THEORY AND IN PRACTICE?**

It accordingly contains an exposition and discussion of the fundamental **PRINCIPLES** of the system; a statement and defence of its more important **DOCTRINES** respecting church order and discipline; the testimony of **ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY**, that such for substance was the polity of the Primitive Churches; an enumeration and explanation of the ecclesiastical **PRACTICES** of Congregationalists; and a development of some of the prominent **ADVANTAGES** of this system over all others.

No one can be more sensible of the difficulty of executing such a plan, than the writer now is; had he been equally so before he undertook the task, it probably would have saved him the trouble of this preface.

An apology for the work may perhaps be found in its history. About three years since, the writer was appointed

by the Clerical Association of which he is a member, to prepare a dissertation upon Congregationalism. This he was requested to publish; but, though the result of considerable reading and reflection, it was regarded by him as too immature to be offered to the public. A renewal of the request of the Association at their next meeting, induced the author to re-write the essay and to preach the substance of it to the people of his charge. The unsolicited opinion of intelligent parishioners, who were ignorant of the doings of the Association, led to the belief that the substance of the discourses might prove acceptable to the denomination generally. A revision was accordingly begun. This revision led to a further examination of authorities, a multiplication of topics, a more extended range of discussion, and ultimately, to the decision to submit this volume to the judgment of the public.

The work has been written, not for the wise, nor for those exactly who are simple; but, mainly, for that large class of persons who occupy the intermediate space between the learned and the ignorant.

The English reader will occasionally find a word or phrase in Latin or Greek; but rarely unaccompanied by a translation, and never, it is believed, in such a position as to break the sense of the sentence.

It is no part of the author's plan to make war on other denominations: yet, he has felt constrained to speak freely, though it is hoped kindly, of those from whom he differs.

That he has fallen into no errors, in a work so abounding in distinct and controverted topics, is, perhaps, more than can be reasonably expected; but, he has certainly used his

utmost care to avoid mistakes. The opinions expressed in these pages may possibly be somewhat modified by further investigation and reflection; but as they now appear, they are not the offspring of haste, nor, it is confidently believed, of mere prejudice.

The Appendix contains numerous articles of considerable importance to the illustration of the general subject of Congregationalism.

Adopting the language of the learned and excellent Samuel Mather, in his "Apology for the Liberties of the Churches in New England," the author commends his labors to the favor of the churches and to the blessing of God;—"I am far from assuming any thing of authority to myself in the following sheets. If I have collected the sense of others right, and well epitomized their thoughts, which are variously dispersed, and reduced them to a clear and natural order, I shall think it sufficient."

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