

**THE NATIONAL COUNCIL  
OF CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCHES OF THE UNITED  
STATES**

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The National Council of Congregational Churches of the United States by E. Lyman Hood

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**E. LYMAN HOOD**

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REV. ALONZO H. QUINT, D. D.

Born 1828 — Died 1896

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL  
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CHURCHES OF THE  
UNITED STATES ❁ ❁ ❁

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BY REV. E. LYMAN HOOD, M. A., Ph. D.,  
Member American Historical Association



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## PREFACE

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IN the memorable trip over sea in July, 1891, on the fated "City of Chicago," which bore the delegates of America to the First International Council in London, it was my good fortune to occupy a stateroom with Rev. Alonzo H. Quint. This privilege gave much time for happy converse, which was especially valuable to me, a young man. The polity of the Congregational Churches was our favorite theme. And with the great meeting, to which we both journeyed as delegates, before us, it was natural that the Council, its history and function, should have been uppermost in our minds. One day, he turned and said in his emphatic way, "You should write a history of the National Council." My work as Missionary Superintendent for several years in the West had indeed kept the polity of the churches ever before me. The genial doctor's request was not forgotten. With each recurring session since, articles have been prepared by request for our acknowledged denominational journals, which have received far greater commendation than their merit deserved. At the last session, a pamphlet was prepared; and, though a considerable edition was printed, it was immediately exhausted. Requests came from men whose judgment commands respect, in different parts of the country, that the treatise be amplified. The present monograph is the result.

It has been my purpose to tell the history of the Council as much as possible in the language of its own decisions and acts. To tell the story as simply as possible and to seek the interpretation of its function in the abiding principles of our polity, which

have governed our churches from the beginning, has been the constant aim. To each session go up delegates not present in former Councils, anxious, withal, to enter intelligently by sympathetic knowledge into the work of the assembly. This class, especially, has been borne continually in mind.

With the growing expansion of the nation and the multiplication of our churches, there is more and more manifest an earnest desire for fellowship. The proverbial "rope of sand" polity will no longer endure the strain put upon it by a faith which reaches from ocean to ocean, and even to the islands of the sea. Centripetal forces are in the air. Centralization prevails everywhere. The churches have learned by experience that there is strength in union. The Council came at a critical time and fulfilled expectations. It has been accepted as the logical and necessary outcome. In it the churches have found a bond of privilege and blessing. Already it has vindicated its right to be, and has practically overcome all hostile criticism. From its inception, thirty years ago, the Council has steadily grown in the favor and confidence of the churches; and it now seems probable that this growth will continue. If so, the Council is destined to exert an ever increasing influence.

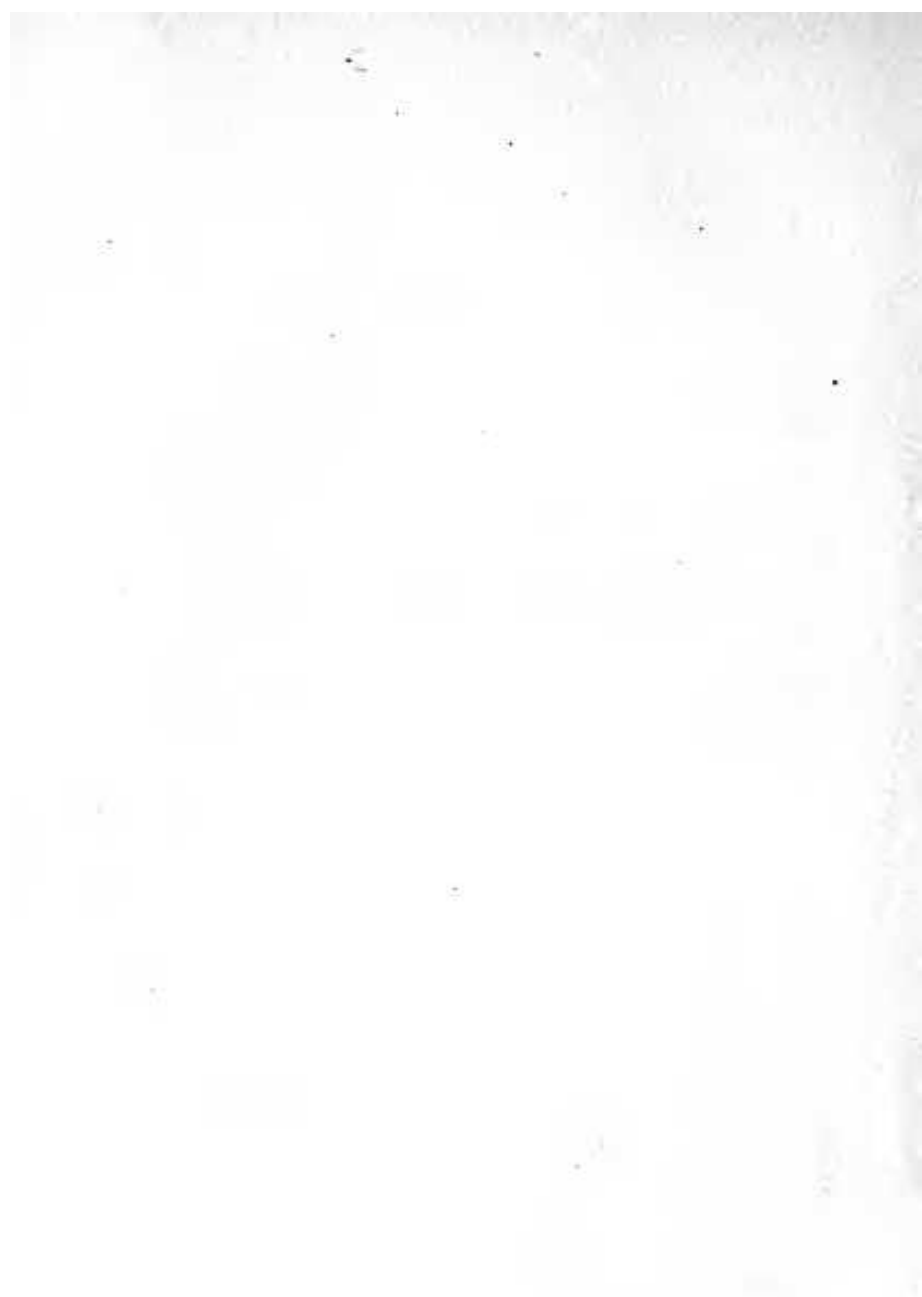
It remains for me to express my sense of gratitude to those of my older, more experienced brethren, East and West, who have encouraged me in the undertaking, and who have kindly assisted me by giving invaluable data and counsel. Especially must I mention Prof. Addison Van Name, who, as Librarian of Yale University, is custodian of the priceless library of the Rev. H. M. Dexter; also Rev. W. H. Cobb, Librarian of the Congregational Library, Boston, both of whom lent their assistance.



## THE "NEWTOWN" SYNOD

The First General Convention of the Congregational Churches of  
America, Held in Newtown, Colony Massachusetts,  
August 30—September 22, 1637.

*Moderators*, REV. PETER BULKELEY,  
REV. THOMAS HOOKER.





## THE "NEWTOWN" SYNOD

"A synode is a joyning or partaking of the authorite of manie churches mette together in peace, for redresse and deciding of matters, which cannot well be otherwise taken up," is the unique definition of a council, in the first book published in the interests of Congregationalism. This volume, with its long title, so characteristic of the age in which it was written—"A Booke which Sheweth the Life and Manners of all True Christians, and how unlike they are unto Turkes and Papists, and Heathen Folke" was written in 1582 by the founder of our faith and practice, Robert Browne, while an exile in Holland. This little book of one hundred pages gives in substance the present doctrine held by the members of the Pilgrim churches.

Two years later, in another tract, he wrote, "Furthermore thei particularlie agreed off the manner . . . for seeking to other churches to have their helpe, being better informed, or to bring them to reformation." In these two declarations we find the two great principles upon which the Congregational denomination rests. Modifications many and radical were to be made from time to time; but there has always been a return to the primitive faith and practice. The complete independency and sovereignty of the local, single church, and,