

1. The Religious bodies and the Constitution.

This was, in some ways, a totally new setting for the world or religions and although the ideal had long been recognized the implementation of it was suddenly new. The Constitution offered guarantees in three areas:

- federal neutrality in confessional matters
- federal guarantee of free exercise
- separation of church and state as entities

These guarantees were geared along three generally understood lines that enable both church and state to function for their particular purposes while not being total foreigners to one another. These lines of development were:

- equality
- popular sovereignty
- nationality

This sort of framework allowed a broad working area and in this area would be seen the expression of:

- individualism
- experimentation
- atavism
- nationalism
- popularism
- denominationalism, etc.

And, of course, the great allowance is for no religion at all so that the society could function in accord with its conscience so far as the demonstrable religious practice was exercised. I will note that in allowing such freedom one also allows for the existence and continuance of things that may be counter to that freedom and even destructive of it. It is a calculated risk.

2. The Congregational Church in the National Period (Foundational notes are on pages 19-22)

a. Although not an hierarchical structure, the loose body of congregationalism was dealt a fierce blow by the disestablishment. This lose of power base coupled with community control tended to accelerate the movement of unitarianism in the congregational community. The general distrust of organization did not help. It had left them without a common voice in the past and kept them from establishing one in the new nation. It was, in some ways, the premier religion and the independence it mirrored in its individuality was a pattern for the new territory. But it was slated for a difficult history in the national period...one from which it has not yet fully recovered.