

Congregationalism – Heritage & Future

Class #7 – Identity

October 28, 2020

Introduction

- 1) *Question:* Should SCC join a denomination?
- 2) No matter how we answer that question, shouldn't we first ask a more fundamental question?
 - a) *Question:* What are we?
 - b) How would you describe this church?
 - c) Should we identify with set a theological/denominational tradition?
 - d) However, to quote the band Rush: "*if you choose not to decide you still have made a choice.*"
 - i) Pastor Doug believes that not answering is dangerously dogmatic.
 - ii) Also, to say one is "biblical" is not helpful
 - iii) Labels are very important.

A History of Theological Self-Identification

1) Historical Protestantism

- a) Common during the Reformation (16th century through the early 19th century).
- b) Strong theological/denominational creedal statements.
- c) For Congregationalism:
 - Westminster Shorter & Larger Catechisms (1646-47)
 - Cambridge Platform (1648)
 - Savoy Declaration of Faith (1658)
 - Saybrook Platform (1708)
- d) This no longer exists in its Congregational form.
The closest are conservative Presbyterian denominations.
- e) *Points of discussion:*
 - i) Is this too narrow?
 - ii) Is there not theological freedom on secondary issues?

2) Liberal Protestantism

- a) Common during the late 19th & early 20th century.
- b) Strong rejection of theological/denominational creed statements.
 - i) Individuals should follow Jesus as "the spirit" leads.
 - ii) "Deeds not creeds."

- c) Congregationalism lead the way in this.
 - i) National Association of Congregational Christian Churches (NACCC)
www.naccc.org
 - ii) United Church of Christ (UCC)
www.ucc.org
- d) *Point of discussion*: This is heresy and dogmatically intolerant of biblical Christianity.

3) **Evangelical Protestantism**

- a) Common during the 1950's into the present.
- b) Rejects Theological Liberalism, Fundamentalism and detailed creedal statements.
Favorites "Statements of Faith" that define general (biblical/Protestant) Christianity.
- c) Frequently uses the term "non-denominational"
(There are even non-denominational denominations!)
(calvarycca.org)
- d) This has had little impact on Congregationalism except for
the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference.
www.cccusa.com
- e) *Point of discussion*: Is the minimal enough? Does it become liberal overtime?
Billy Graham (1918-2018)
Jerry Falwell (1933-2007)
Rich Warren (1954-)
Joel Osteen (1963-)

Examples of Churches

United Church of Christ of Torrington, CT
www.torringtonunited.org

Calvary Southbury Church
www.calvarysouthbury.com

Second Congregational Church of Winsted, CT
sccwinsted.org

Westminster Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Hamden, CT
westminsterhamden.org