

# 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 (16<sup>th</sup> century through the early 19<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> & early 20<sup>th</sup> 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