

Congregationalism – Heritage & Future

Class #9 – Conclusion & Discussion
November 18, 2020

Pastor Doug Thoughts, Opinions & Questions

- 1) Our Congregational Heritage is beautiful and the “gold” standard of theological traditions. 1Cor 3:12-13
- 2) Historic, traditional, biblical, Congregationalism is found in its great creeds . . .
 - a) **Savoy Declaration of Faith** (1658)
 - b) **Westminster Shorter and Larger Catechisms** (1646-47)
 - c) **Cambridge Platform** (1648)
 - d) **Saybrook Platform** (1708)
- 3) Historic, traditional, biblical, Congregationalism is all but dead.
 - a) The America Congregational denominations are not Congregationalists.
 - i) United Church of Christ (UCC) is far left, neo-pagan, anti-Christian.
 - ii) National Association of Congregational Christian Churches (NACCC) affirms congregational government but Christianity is an optional extra.
 - iii) Conservative Congregational Christian Conference (CCCC) is generically evangelical, but with a decreasing commitment to congregational government and an increasing focus on pop-evangelicalism.
 - iv) Evangelical Association of Reformed and Congregational Christian Churches are even more squishy evangelical than the CCCC.
 - b) The Reformed Congregational Fellowship and the New England Reformed Fellowship solely focuses on pastoral academic conferences.
 - c) The only denominations Pastor Doug can find that might affirm the Savoy are two small ones in Ireland.
 - i) Congregational Union of Ireland
 - ii) Congregational Reformed Church of Belfast, Northern Ireland
- 4) Historic Congregationalism is now found in modern America Presbyterianism.
 - a) As the Westminster Assembly and the Saybrook Platform show, the Congregationalists and Presbyterians have worked closely together from the beginning and are theologically very similar.
 - b) Conservative American Presbyterian churches usually affirm local church ownership of their property, which makes them de facto Congregationalists?
 - c) There are several American conservative Presbyterian churches:
 - i) Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)
 - ii) Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)
 - iii) Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC)
 - iv) The newly forming Vanguard Presbyterian Church which thinks the above are drifting into liberalism.

- 5) Having a simple evangelical statement of faith is not enough.
- a) Affirming a confessional tradition is superior.
 - b) However, allowing theological freedom on secondary issues for those in the pews is a good thing. (Though how this works with congregational government is a question?)
 - c) To quote the Cambridge Platform on "Admission of Members into the Church"

"The Lord Jesus would not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed, but gather the tender lambs in his arms, and carry them gently in his bosom. Such charity and tenderness is to be used, as the weakest Christian if sincere, may not be excluded, nor discouraged. Severity of examination is to be avoided."

- 6) Joining a denomination for a local church, and/or a pastor having standing with a denomination, is a good and godly thing. 2Cor 8:18-24
1Tim 4:14
- a) It requires the local church have a clear understanding who it is.
 - b) It requires a lot of prayerful work and it shouldn't be a quick decision.
 - c) It requires constant submission and vigilance to Christ as King.

7) What next? If anything?

- a) For SCC, at the very least, the leadership should be aware that American conservative Presbyterian denominations allow their clergy to serve "out of bounds" in non-Presbyterian churches.
- b) Anything beyond this?