



1330-1384
John Wycliffe

1370-1400's
Lollards



1372-1415
John Hus

1414
Council of Constance
(Wycliffe & Hus condemned)

1415
Hus martyred



1483
Birth of Martin Luther

1484
Birth of Ulrich Zwingli

1497
John Cabot
(discovers Newfoundland)

1509
Birth of John Calvin

1513
Birth of John Knox

1517
Luther's 95 Theses

1521
Diet of Worms
(Luther's "Here I Stand" speech)



1523-25
Zwingli's reforms in Zurich

1524-25
Peasants' War

1525
Swiss Brethren (Anabaptists)
break with Zwingli

1530
Augsburg Confession
(Lutheran)

A History of the Reformation in the English Speaking World

While for the sake of a divorce the break with Rome took place under Henry VIII (r.1509 - 1547) between the years 1532 - 4, it was not until the short reign of his son, King Edward VI (r.1547 - 1553), that the church in England was truly reformed. Henry had retained Roman Catholicism in all but name. Transubstantiation,¹ the form of worship, and the celibacy of the priesthood, etc., were all articles of faith in Henry's church. Further he took the Pope's place as 'Supreme Ruler,' an article which all clergy were to subscribe on pain of death.² Edward's reforms in contrast were very thorough, both in what the new church believed (his 1551 prayer Book contained 42 articles and 15 homilies³ that were all thoroughly reformed in nature) and the way that it proscribed the worship of its faith. Gone was the Mass, elaborate ritual, stone altars, ornate robes and vestments,⁴ replaced by preaching the word of God, and a simple celebration of the Lord's Supper, around a wooden table kept to one side, the minister permitted to wear the more simple black academic robe.

Edward's Archbishop, Cranmer, successfully invited a number of leading continental divines to come to England and teach, including Martin Bucer and Peter Martyr, as well as persecuted Protestant congregations from all over Europe. One of the most significant effects to flow from this 'invasion,' was the influence of those who sympathized with the Reformation of Zwingli, and particularly his successor, Henry Bullinger. This was important, not only because it brought the Reformation more fully to England, but because it opened up English thought to differences in doctrine that existed among the teachings of the continental Reformers, which in turn coalesced with important embryonic Protestant thought which began in England under Wycliffe some hundred years prior to Luther.⁵ This led to the development of a uniquely English Reformation, a branch at least equal in significance and influence to Luther in Germany, Calvin in France and Switzerland, and John Knox in Scotland.

¹The teaching that the bread and wine are actually transformed into the body and blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

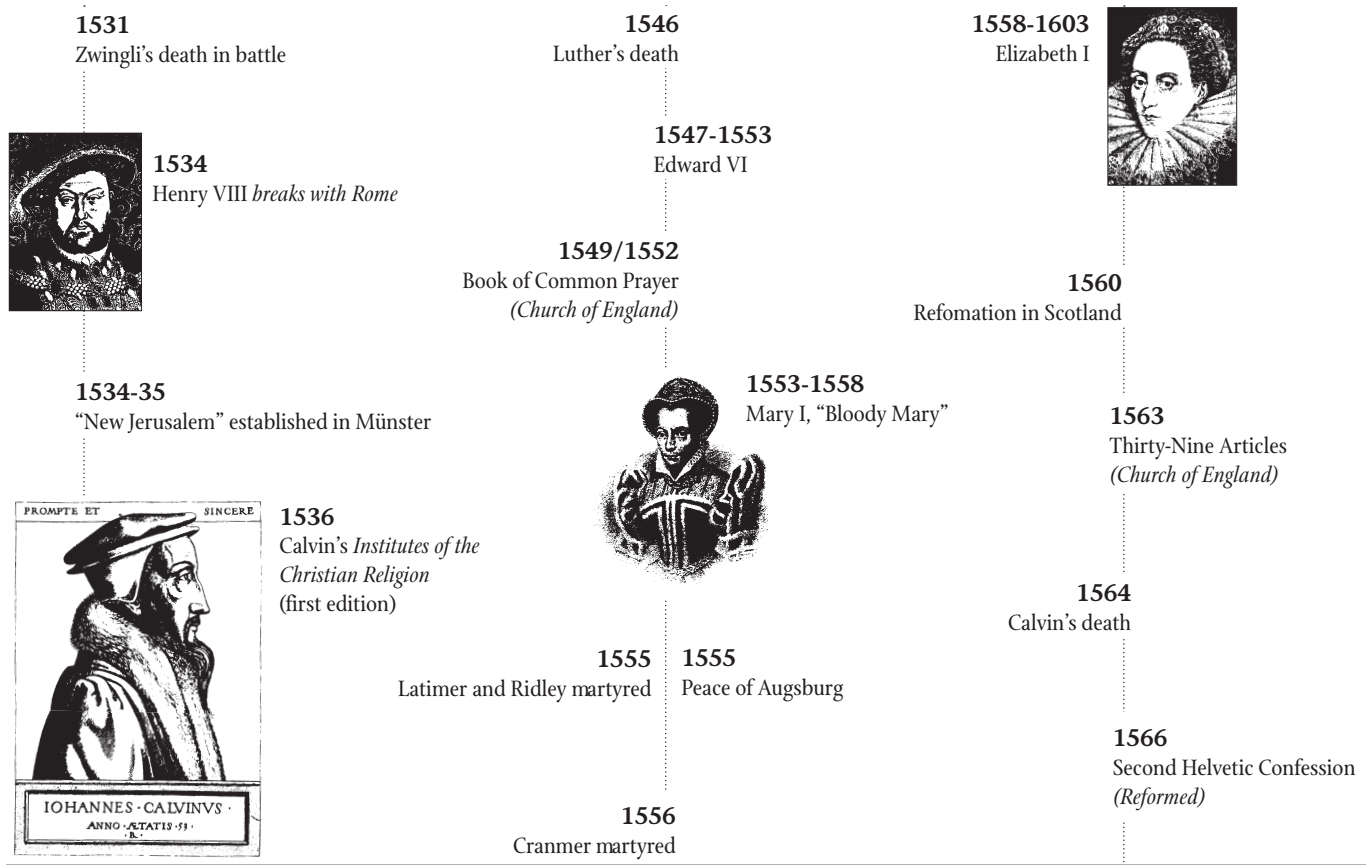
²Ironically, including Henry's long time friend and confidant, the great humanist, Sir Thomas Moore.

³The homilies or sermons of the Church of England were written by Thomas Cranmer, and concerned the fundamental issues of the

Reformation, especially those pertaining to the nature of justification and faith.

⁴A vest like garment that was usually quite ornate.

⁵Indeed, which prepared the way for Luther, since Wycliffe taught Hus who went back to Moravia, started the Hussite movement which prepared the ground for more radical thought.



From Bloody Mary to the Elizabethan Settlement

However, Edward's reforms were short lived. Upon the King's death his sister Mary Tudor (Mary I or 'Bloody Mary') became Queen and reintroduced the Roman Catholic faith to England. Mary reigned from 1553 - 1558. With great zeal she executed (by burning) many of the leading English Reformers, including Archbishop Thomas Cranmer and Bishop Ridley. She married her cousin, King Philip of Spain, and hoped - unsuccessfully - to have a child by him. Upon her death, her sister, Elizabeth Tudor, became Queen (reigning from 1558 - 1603), and England again became Protestant, though rather less Protestant than under Edward VI. Her's was the 'Elizabethan settlement,' a compromised reformation: compromised because it reformed the soteriology⁶ of the Church of England in line with Calvin's teaching, but ecclesiastically⁷ again merely replaced the Pope with Elizabeth! Some time later the theory behind Elizabeth's policy was succinctly expressed, 'No bishop no King.' In other words abolish Episcopacy,⁸ and the next thing to go will be the monarchy! (As Charles I found out!).⁹ The central compromise of Elizabeth's 'reformation' concerned the nature of the church and the order of worship. Again, while Anglicanism may have been committed to Calvin's teachings on salvation, and while the sacrifice of the Mass was abolished

to be replaced with a view of the Lord's Supper whose nature was primarily a confirmation of spiritual communion with Christ (much in line with the teaching of Zwingli¹⁰), its ecclesiology and many aspects of its worship were much as they were under Rome, just the language changed from Latin to English, and prayers to the Virgin Mary were removed! Concerning the Queen's relationship to the church she adopted the more modest title, 'Supreme Governor,' keeping strict control through Bishops.

Enter the Puritans

Within this frustrating context there evolved a section of English Christendom who were increasingly unhappy with the 'settlement,' these purists earned the nickname, 'Puritans,' and it wasn't meant favorably! The Puritans wanted a 'total reformation based on the Word of God,' particularly of the church institution. Many had fled to Protestant Europe during the reign of the catholic Queen Mary and had picked up radical ideas studying as they did under Reformers such as Calvin and Bullinger (Zwingli's successor). Then there were those who looked some what jealously to events in Scotland. There in the 1560's John Knox had helped lead a bold and successful 'revolution' against the Roman Catholic Queen, Mary Stuart, (who was also the Queen Dowager of France). In 1577 Queen Mary, under pressure, abdicated in favor of her

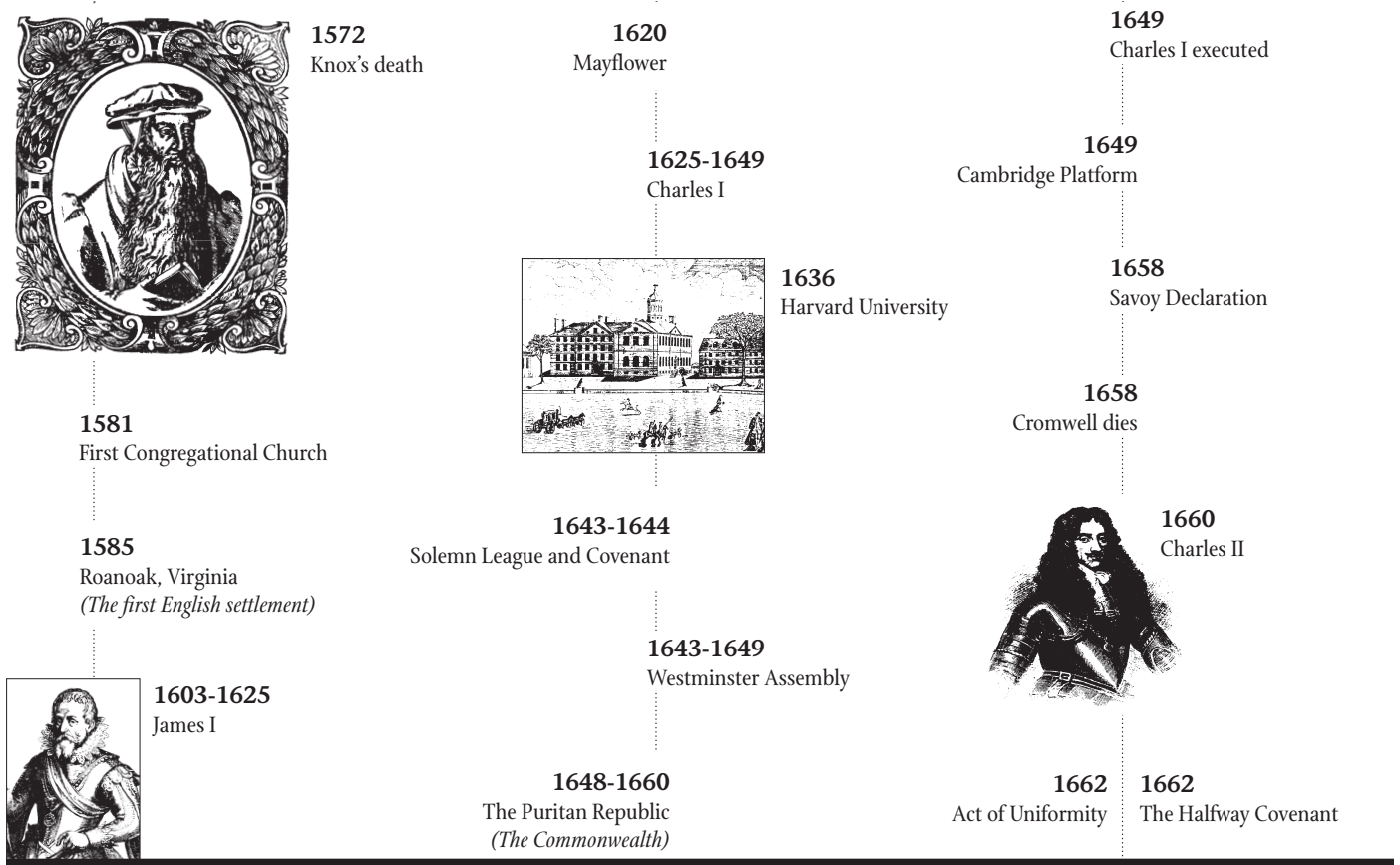
⁶From the Greek 'soter' to save - the study of salvation.

⁷From the Greek 'ekklesia,' the church - the study of the church.

⁸From the Greek 'episcopoi,' meaning bishop, hence episcopacy speaks of a church governed by bishops, archbishops, etc.

⁹See page 5, paragraph 1.

¹⁰Of all the Reformers, Zwingli had the least mystical view of the Lord's Supper. Luther remained near the Roman Catholic Teaching with his view of Consubstantiation; that the body and blood are present in the sacraments. Calvin held a mid way position between Luther and Zwingli. All the Reformers though, gave priority to the necessity of faith.



infant son, James, who became King James VI under a Presbyterian Regent, the Earl of Murray. John Knox abolished elaborate ceremony, vestments, bishops and popes altogether, and established the Presbyterianism he learned from Calvin in Geneva with its tight church discipline, with some variations, to become the Established Church of Scotland.

However, back in England there were some Puritans who thought that Presbyterianism didn't go far enough either. These men objected to the idea of a State Church altogether. Religion is an issue of men's consciences not an issue for the civil magistrate. Implicitly they believed that the Reformers had failed (probably for pragmatic reasons) to truly reform Catholic ecclesiology. The Emperor Constantine and the Theologian Augustine had successfully 'nationalized' the Church and made it an arm of the State. In this Luther, Calvin and Knox had simply inherited the status quo. (It is of more than passing interest that in the early days of the Reformation, Luther and Zwingli showed clear inclinations toward a substantially Congregational view of the church, taking it as the New Testament model.)

What is the church?

These Puritans asked, 'What is the church?' The issue at stake was this: Is it something territorial, coexistent with boundaries of the nation-state, supervised ('protected') by civil government, and comprised all persons baptized as babies, and as adults agreeing to its doctrinal statements (the confessions) living under the watchful moral eye of Elders or is it more essentially a voluntary community, comprised of those who can testify a personal conversion experience, walking together according to the godliness of faith? Those who held the second view represented the radical voice of English Puritanism. The idea of a voluntary, non state church spread all over Europe initially through the influence of the Anabaptists,¹¹ but it was in England that it was to gain significant sway.

Two figures in particular may be mentioned. Robert Browne (b.1553 - d.1633) and Thomas Cartwright (b.1535 - d.1603). Browne's views were expressed in his influential but proscribed works, 'Treatise of Reformation without Tarrying for Anie,' and 'Booke which Sweweth the Life and Manners of

¹¹Anabaptists, lit. 'rebaptizers,' were members of a variety of 16th-century religious groups that rejected the baptism of infants. Since they believed that only after a conscious experience of faith in Christ should a person be baptized, they taught that converts who had been baptized in infancy must be rebaptized. Anabaptists defined the church as a community of true saints who should separate themselves from the world through a voluntary covenant. A

number were thoroughly Evangelical (such as the Mennonites in Holland), but many came to unduly emphasize eschatology (the Millennium and Second Coming), and the subjective side of the Christian life, many claiming the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit for their strange beliefs and excessive practices. For these, and a number of other reasons, the Reformers disclaimed them, regarding them (quite rightly) fundamentally opposed to the ideas of the Reformation.

all True Christians.’ Both were published in the 1580’s. In these he set forth his principal tenets: the church is a gathered or voluntary community: it comprises of all those who can testify to a converting work of grace; the church as a local body of believers is responsible neither to Bishop nor King but to itself, and ultimately the Word of God.

The means by which the local church became a church was through subscription - not to a set of beliefs - but a simple covenant. The following example is taken from the Congregational church at Salem, Massachusetts, and is dated 1629:

We covenant with the Lord and with one another; and do bind ourselves in the presence of God, to walk together in his ways, according as he is pleased to reveal unto us in his blessed word of truth.

These views became especially popular in the Eastern parts of England, and a number of ‘gathered’ congregations met outside the pale of the Established Church. Towards the ends of Elizabeth’s reign she began to more vigorously persecute the various branches of Puritanism, and particularly this one. As a consequence a number of the ‘Brownists’ fled to Holland.

James VI of Scotland

With the death of Elizabeth, James VI of Scotland inherited the English throne as James I. There was much hope among English Puritans that a Scottish Presbyterian Monarch (as it turned out, with a solidly Episcopalian heart) would be sympathetic to their views. Thus, on his journey from Edinburgh to London to claim his crown he was presented with the ‘Millenary Petition’¹² seeking reformation for the Church of England. They were to be disappointed, the only point of concession was the authorization of a new translation of the bible, the King James Version.

Pressures for church Reform increased alike from Presbyterian Puritans and the ‘Independents’ - the early name given to Congregationalists. James’ own preferences went the other way. To the great annoyance of his Puritan subjects (who were growing in numbers and influence) and their spiritual sensitivities, James ordered in 1618 the ‘Book of Sports’ to be read from all pulpits in his realms. The ‘Book of Sports’ was a compendium of sports and games that James suggested as ‘suitable’ forms of recreation for the Sabbath. It was a deliberate act of defiance in the face of Puritan beliefs concerning the Sabbath. Imagine the scene: There were the Puritans preaching against all forms of ‘worldliness’ on Sundays, and there was the King determined to fill his subjects minds with every Sabbath breaking activity he could think of! James died (1625) and was succeeded by his son Charles I.

Mayflower Compact

It was during James’ reign that the group of English Congregationalists who fled from Boston (Lincolnshire) to Leyden, Holland under Elizabeth, returned (briefly) via Plymouth on route to the New World. Their boat was called, ‘Mayflower,’ their captain, ‘John Robinson,’ their new home, Plymouth, their Charter, the ‘Mayflower Compact.’¹³

Having undertaken for the Glory of God, and the Advancement of the Christian Faith, and the Honour of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in these northern parts of Virginia; do by these presents, solemnly and mutually in the presence of God and of one another, covenant and combine ourselves together onto a civil body politick, for the better Ordering and Preservation, and furtherance of the Ends aforesaid; And by virtue hereof to enact, constitute and frame, such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions and Offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the General Good of the Colony; unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.

Charles Stuart and the end of the Episcopacy

Charles Stuart had only one love, power. He reissued the Book of Sports in 1633. He sought to impose the English Prayer Book and Episcopacy upon his Scottish subjects in 1637 and the years following. That didn’t go down very well! In 1642 the English civil war began with the Puritans and Parliament on one side, the King and the Royalists on the other. At first the war went badly for the English Parliament, so they were forced to seek the help of the Scottish Parliament. The Scots were happy to help, at a price! They secured the promise to abolish Episcopacy, and in its place establish ‘biblical church government’ in England and her dominions. (Everyone knew this really meant Presbyterianism, but it wasn’t explicitly mentioned). In 1644 as a consequence of this promise, every Englishman over 18 years of age was required to swear an oath affirming this, the ‘solemn league and covenant.’

To cut a long story short, the King lost the war and his head. Oliver Cromwell became Lord Protector, England, Scotland, Ireland ‘and the dominions belonging thereto’ became a ‘Commonwealth’ and the hated Episcopacy was abolished.

Thus the Puritan Republic was established. Christmas and Easter were abolished, as were all such holidays and festivals. The Sabbath was strictly enforced. Dancing was forbidden. Stained glass windows were either smashed or removed, all church walls were whitewashed, and all adornments were removed.

Independency

But all was not well within Puritanism. There was that promise to establish ‘biblical church Government.’ The Scots

¹²So called because it contained the signature of a thousand Ministers of the Established Church.

¹³Generally recognized as the first constitutional document in the history of the United States.

knew what that meant, as did a large number of English Puritans - Presbyterianism! The Westminster Assembly of Divines had been summoned in 1643, the theological elements of its confession had already received the weight of Law, the ecclesiastical elements had been enacted for Scotland. The push was now to enforce those elements on England and wider afield. Many non Presbyterians feared the worst. In 1649 the New England Congregationalists drew up their Cambridge Platform in anticipation that Parliament was about to amend their Charters, and establish Presbyterianism in America. However, a large number of Puritans had no intention of allowing this to happen anywhere on English soil. Not least among these was the army and the Lord Protector. In 1657 Independency formally won the day.

In 1658 the Independents in England (somewhat wearily) drew up their first confession of faith, the 'Savoy Declaration.' 'The church government section is brief and clear, establishing clear autonomy for local congregations under the headship of Christ.' Congregationalism became the official religion, but as long as you were neither 'papist nor prelatist'¹⁴ you could practice your Christianity in peace.

Act of Uniformity

However, there was to be no peace. In 1658 Oliver died, and his son Richard became Lord Protector. Both an uninspiring and incompetent leader, the Commonwealth grew weary of its enforced Puritanism and its tight legalism and Parliament asked Charles Stuart's son, also Charles, to return as King Charles II. With the passing of the Act of Uniformity¹⁵ in 1662 Episcopacy was again established in England, Presbyterianism in Scotland, and the non conforming Puritans were persecuted. (Over 2000 were forced to leave their Pastoral cares). Those Puritans who could not see their way to submitting to the Church of England were increasingly deprived of their civil rights, forbidden to preach or congregate to worship, deprived of civil office, or to attend university. Nearly all these were Independents (Congregationalists and Baptists). Many now emigrated to New England where Congregationalism dominated for the next century and a half.

Congregational Roots

The history of this movement may not be well known today, but certain events and men that surrounded it are. The main events already noted were, the establishment of the New England Colonies and the English Civil war which marked the political high point of Congregationalism, and Oliver Cromwell, the Lord Protector, who was Independency's most influential son. Concerning names of theologians who held to Independency we probably recognize John Owen, Thomas Goodwin, John Goodwin, as well as John Bunyan. From later generations we can add John Cotton, the Mathers and Jonathan Edwards. More recently, C. H. Spurgeon, G. Campbell Morgan and Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Of North America's five oldest Universities three were established as

Congregational Institutions, including the oldest, Harvard (1636) and Yale (1701).¹⁶ Congregationalism remained Established in Connecticut until 1818, and in Massachusetts until 1833. There is one more direct off-shoot of English Congregationalism that needs to be mentioned, the Baptists, presently the world's largest Protestant denomination!

¹⁴Prelatist, one who believes in episcopacy.

¹⁵An Act which required all forms of Christian worship in England and

Wales to conform to the Book of Common Prayer.

¹⁶Princeton (1746) was Presbyterian, William and Mary, Anglican.

The Issues Defined and Considered

The fundamental distinction that separates Congregationalists from Presbyterians and Episcopalians, indeed that separates Congregationalists even from the Magisterial Reformers (Luther, Calvin, Knox, etc.) concerns:

Primarily, the nature of visible the church.

Secondarily, the church's relationship to the State.

Concerning the nature of the visible church the Episcopalians¹⁷ and Presbyterians teach that it is provincial or national, but not local. In other words 'church' speaks of universal group living in a nation, thus Presbyterian Church of America, the Church of England. The local expression of this church is not called a church, nor it is a church proper in their understanding of the term. It is only a church in union with the others. Thus the Roman Catholic Church consists of the Pope, Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops, Priests and the Laity. Without all its components it is not a church. Similarly, the Presbyterian church is that which in totality includes all from the newest church member to the full General Assembly.

In contrast Congregationalists believe the essence of the visible church exists only in its local expression. What the Episcopalians and Presbyterians call a church, we would call an organization or an institution! The visible church consists of a local body of believers who have entered into a mutual covenant together, which does not even have to be explicitly stated, but exists where ever there is a common submission to the word of God. Luther said the church existed wherever the gospel is preached and the sacraments rightly administered.

This brings us on to the issue of second consideration, what makes for church membership? Episcopalians and Presbyterians agree that church membership is initially through baptism as an infant, later affirmed through a service of confirmation in which the individual personally confirms various expressions of his church's confession of faith. The bottom line though is that for all these 'churches' membership is on the basis of baptism as an infant, joined with some later affirmation of doctrine and absence of open scandal.

Congregationalists too generally require baptism and adherence to sound doctrine, but not as a grounds for church membership, that depends upon one's personal testimony of Christian conversion, and present possession of assurance. This latter requirement is either in some part or wholly lacking in Presbyterian and Episcopalian churches, their emphasis being on the objective, external grounds of assurance, especially baptism and the Lord's Supper. ('I have been baptized, therefore I am a child of God.' 'On the basis of these symbols I believe that God is for me, therefore, He is for me.') Between the Episcopalians and the Presbyterian tradition, the major difference concerns a much greater emphasis on church discipline in the latter. Both lack a robust doctrine concerning the conversion experience. This

confusion is in part due to an erroneous view of baptism, both traditions embrace the words 'this child is regenerate' in their service of infant baptism, both severely depart from the Reformers teaching on the unity of faith with assurance. What ever their views on baptism, all the Reformers held in the strongest terms to the necessity a felt assurance. All insisted that no one had any biblical claim to be a true Christian who at the same time did not have the personal testimony of the Holy Spirit that he is a believer.

Congregationalists took a firm stand on this, and insisted that no one can become a member of the visible church (a local congregation) with out it.

George Whitefield, John Wesley, and indeed the entire movement known as the Great Awakening followed the Puritan Congregationalists in this emphasis. Though it must be noticed it wasn't a Congregational distinctive, Whitefield and Wesley were consciously following Thomas Cranmer's Homilies of the Church of England in this. Cranmer himself, reflecting what he in turn had learned from the Reformers in Europe. It was this sense of assurance that ultimately came to distinguish Evangelicalism as Evangelicalism. Some of you may be aware that in the strictest sense there is a difference between being Reformed and being Evangelical. The former tend to focus on the objective elements to the Christian faith, the latter to its subjective elements. It is interesting that those Reformed theologians who most inspired the later Evangelicalism were those who had unquestionably the most developed theology of the Holy Spirit - John Calvin, Thomas Goodwin, John Owen and Jonathan Edwards. By and large they also had the strongest teaching on the church as a body or community, and individual Christians as priests, were most resistant to legalism, and the most insistent upon personal holiness. They also had the most experiential definitions concerning what it means to live the Christian life. These were men whose pastoral focus was upon the believers individual experiences of God. It is also a fact that those in this tradition had the most developed form of church discipline something very notable absent in the other traditions (except Presbyterianism).

Secondly, the churches relationship to the State. Our 'opponents' have historically favored the Establishment of Religion, except where they were in the minority, then they were all in favor of toleration! This led to a situation in Europe where the Protestants became as intolerant of other branches within the same Reformed tradition as the Roman Catholic church was of Protestants. You need only to look at a religious map of Europe to see this: Germany and Scandinavia, Lutheran. Switzerland, France and Scotland, Calvinist, and England was Calvinist in Soteriology and Catholic in Ecclesiology! England was the only country to see a variety of reformed faiths develop and it took the English Civil war to achieve it.

¹⁷For the sake of this discussion, Episcopalians include Roman Catholics, Lutherans and the Church of England.

Moreover, because membership in the churches was essentially by baptism, church and state became virtually synonymous, and with it the distinction between Christian and non-Christian blurs. This may well explain why the English Puritans abandoned Calvin's teaching on assurance, after all, what do you do if most of your members don't have it? Ask them to leave or let them stay, just behave in a moral and non scandalous fashion? Jonathan Edwards faced this question after his grandfather's generation had dropped the insistence upon assurance as a necessary condition for church membership in New England, this was the so called Halfway Covenant of 1662.¹⁸ Edwards took his stand with Calvin and was expelled from his church on account of it.

A non experimental Christianity also undermines the priesthood of the believer, and I believe, explains why non Congregational churches have such an emphasis on Liturgy, and the indispensable nature of the ordained ministry. (Thus, only those who are ordained may preach, or administer the sacraments). If I were to be blunt you don't need the Holy Spirit if you organize it all yourself, and won't notice His absence if He is not there. Again, we must notice that it is to the Congregational and Evangelical tradition that we owe the use of extempore preaching and prayer, and a good number of our hymns!¹⁹ Those familiar with the history will know that it was this that caused such a scandal with the ministry of Whitefield and Wesley in the British Isles. It was far less Controversial in America, because most of New England was Congregational - though not all of it. There was a very large Presbyterian contingent (which actually came to dominate by the end of the 18th century) but it split in two as a result of the Great Awakening. Those in favor of it - the New Lights, and those against it, the Old Lights.

What has been written ...

What has been written is intended as an apology for Congregationalism, it is neither an exhaustive definition of all their peculiarities, nor a biblical or historical defense of all the issues involved.

Despite the occasionally argumentative style, this paper is not intended as an attack on other views. Nor is it in any way to suggest that others are in sin for their views on Church government, or inferior churches or Christians because of it. Not at all. These men and women are part of our Christian family as such, and we pray for their prosperity. We delight in their freedom to differ from us. However, we do recognize

that God in his mercy plants many kinds of vineyard, and that it is the Christian's individual responsibility to find the one of God's leading for him or her.

Of course, we hope that you are at home with Coram Deo in respect to our Congregational perspective, and with us will seek to apply it. If you are not, we pray that you will find a church home that you are very happy with, and that you remain a good friend of Coram Deo.

¹⁸The Halfway Covenant is the name of a compromise reached by the Congregationalists in New England in a dispute concerning requirements for church membership. Puritans accepted the practice of infant baptism as part of their Covenantal theology, but adults were expected to testify to a personal conversion experience. Only then were they accepted as full members of the church and allowed to participate in the Lord's Supper. As importantly, only then were their children permitted to be baptized. By the mid-1600s it was apparent that many who had been baptized showed no signs of converting grace, and those concerned about purity within the church insisted that ministers could not baptize the children of such halfway members. In 1662 a large assembly of clergymen voted to permit baptism of third-generation Puritans; but the compromise did not settle the basic issue, and the debate raged for another century.

¹⁹The first great hymn writer of the modern era was the Congregationalist Isaac Watts, soon followed by Charles Wesley.

APPENDIX A

A Presbyterian View of Congregationalism

Extracts from William Cunningham's History of Theology.

'In discussing the subject of the Council at Jerusalem, I entered with some detail into the leading points of difference between Presbyterians and Congregationalists on the subject of church government. For this reason, I do not now intend to dwell upon the topic at any length, but merely put together a few observations regarding it.'

'Presbyterianism occupies the golden mean between Episcopacy on the one hand, and Congregationalism on the other; holding some principles in regard to the government of the church in common with Episcopacy against the Congregationalists, and others in common with Congregationalists against Episcopalians. The chief points in which Presbyterians agree with Episcopalians, in opposition to Congregationalists, are these: in denying that each Congregation possesses ordinarily a right, and a divine right, to entire and absolute independence in the regulation of all its affairs; in ascribing the ordinary power of government in each congregation to the office bearers, as distinguished from the ordinary members; and in maintaining the lawfulness and propriety of such a union or organization of different congregations together, as affords warrant and ground for the exercise of a certain measure of authoritative control by ecclesiastical office-bearers over a number of associated congregations.'

'Episcopalians and Presbyterians concur in maintaining, in opposition to Congregationalism, these great principles. They do not consider themselves called upon to concede to the whole body of ordinary believers of a congregation the right of ultimately deciding all questions related to its affairs, and entire sufficiency for the regular performance of every function needful for the preservation of the church, and the administration of all necessary ecclesiastical business; and they refuse to concede to each congregation, regarded collectively as one body, entire independence of all authority and control, exercised by any but its own members. They hold that the right, or rather, the ordinary exercise of the right, of administering the necessary of each congregation, is vested, not in the whole members of the congregation, but in its office bearers (though Presbyterians - not Episcopalians - have generally held, that each congregation has the right of choosing these officer-bearers); and that a wider association of office-bearers is entitled to jurisdiction over each and everyone of the congregations which may be directly or indirectly represented by it. These general views may be said to be held by both Episcopalians and Presbyterians, in opposition to Congregationalists; and they are regarded by them as sanctioned by scriptural statements and apostolic practice, and as much more accordant than with the opposite views with the scriptural representations of the character and constitution of the church of Christ - and especially with the representations given us there of the church as a united, combined, organized body, whose different parts or sections should be closely and intimately linked together.'

'Presbyterians and Congregationalists concur in holding, in opposition to Episcopalians, that the apostles established only two orders of office bearers in the church, - namely, presbyters and deacons; while modern Congregationalists usually regard as unwarranted the distinction which Presbyterians make among presbyters or leaders, by dividing them into two classes, one of whom only rule, and the other both teach and rule. Presbyterians may thus be said to have the concurrence of Episcopalians in the leading points in which they differ from the Congregationalists, and the concurrence of the Congregationalists in the leading points in which they differ from the Episcopalians. The only subject of any material importance affecting the government of the church on which Episcopalians and Congregationalists generally concur in opposition to the Presbyterians, is with respect to the scriptural warrant for the office of what we commonly call ruling, as distinguished from teaching, elders; and the weight due to this concurrence, in opposition to our views, - looking at it simply as a question of authority, - is very greatly diminished by the fact that the most eminent of the early defenders of Congregational principles, - such as Thomas Goodwin, John Goodwin, and the great Dr. John Owen, - were decidedly in favor of the scriptural authority of this office; and that Owen has declared the principal passage on which the Presbyterian distinctives of this subject is founded, that it is a text 'of uncontrollable evidence' (in support of the ruling elder), 'if anything to conflict withal but prejudices and interest.'

'The two leading points in which Congregationalists differ from Presbyterians and Episcopalians upon the subject of church government, are sometimes represented as expressed or indicated by the two principal designations by which they are usually known, - namely, 'Congregationalists' and Independents.' The word 'Congregationalist', under this idea, indicates more immediately that they hold that the body of ordinary members of the church possesses the right regulating all the affairs of the congregation, as distinguished from the office-bearers, to whom this right is ascribed by the Presbyterians; while the word 'Independents' indicates more immediately their other leading principle, - namely, that each congregation, viewed collectively as one body, including the office bearers, is independent of all external authority and control, fully adequate of itself for preserving and perpetuating all church functions, and subject to no control from any other body whatsoever. This distinction is at least useful and convenient, as assisting us in conceiving rightly, and in remembering readily, the leading points in which, as Presbyterians, we differ in opinion from this section of the church of Christ.'

'These peculiar and distinctive principles of Modern Independents or Congregationalists were not explicitly professed, and, of course, were neither formally defended nor assailed in the early church. As a subject of controversial

discussion, they are wholly of modern origin. They seem to have been first publicly and distinctly broached, as exhibiting scriptural views of the constitution and government of the church, by J. B. Morellius or Morely, who was connected with the Reformed Church of France, and whose work on the subject, entitled 'Traicté de la Discipline et Police Chretienne,' was published at Lyons in 1561, and was soon thereafter condemned by the National Synod at Orleans in 1562, and again at Nismes in 1572. They were also embraced by Ramus the celebrated philosopher, who was killed in the massacre of St. Bartholomew; but they made no permanent impression upon the French Protestants. It was not until about twenty or thirty years later, near the end of the sixteenth century, that these views were brought out and practically acted upon in this country, by some persons who might be considered as offshoots of true original English Puritans, and who were known for a time under the name Brownists. These views have not been embraced to any considerable extent among the churches of Christ, and indeed scarcely by any except the descendants of those who first broached them in this country, and who are more numerous body now in the United States than in Great Britain.'

'It is true, indeed, also, that we have not much controversial discussion in regard to Episcopacy and Presbyterianism before the Reformation; but we have at least a pretty full and formal statement of the argument in favor of these two systems as early as the fourth century, - of the scriptural argument in favor of Presbyterianism by Jerome, usually regarded as the most learned of the fathers, - and of the argument in favor of Episcopacy by Epiphanius in reply to Aerius. And it may be worthwhile to observe, in passing, that Jerome's scriptural argument for Presbyterianism is still generally regarded by Presbyterians as a conclusive and unanswerable defense of their cause; while the earnest defense of Prelacy by Epiphanius, has been admitted by some of the ablest defenders of Episcopacy - such as Cardinal Bellarmine, De Dominus, Archbishop of Spalatro, and Hooker - to be weak and unsatisfactory, though they have not I think, been able to devise anything that was greatly superior to it.'

'There is not much connected with the history of the original publication and maintenance of Independent views of church government to commend them to a favorable reception. They were, however, taken up in substance in the seventeenth century by some men who are entitled to the highest respect, and they were embraced and defended very ably in their learning principles, as we have stated them, by Dr. Owen, - certainly one of the very weightiest names in the history of the church, - though he did not carry them out so far as the most modern Independents have done. It is true, likewise, that, in

the history of modern ecclesiastical literature, there is a good deal to which Independents may not unreasonably refer, as affording pretty strong presumptions, so far as a mere authority goes, in favor of their peculiar views. I allude here particularly to the fact, that several very eminent investigators of the history of the church, who did not themselves make a profession of Congregational principles, have conceded that the practice of the early church, from the times immediately succeeding the apostles was either wholly or in great measure in accordance with that of the Congregationalists. Instances of this are Sir Peter King, afterwards Lord Chancellor, Mosheim, Dr. Campbell of Aberdeen, and Neander. These men have all made statements in regard to the constitution and government of the primitive church, which Independents are fairly entitled to plead, as affording some countenance to the peculiar views which they hold in opposition to Presbyterians, though, at the same time, it should be noted, as holding true of all these men, that they did not regard apostolic practice upon this subject as binding upon the church in succeeding ages. Still, the opinion they expressed as to the general practice of the church in the first and second centuries, must be admitted to lend some countenance to the views commonly held on this subject by Congregationalists, and to be well fitted, at once from the general eminence of the men, and their ecclesiastical relations, to presuppose men's minds in favor of Independency. These eminent men have, more or less fully and explicitly, asserted, that, for the first century at least, each congregation - that is, the whole of it, and not merely the whole of the office-bearers - transacted in common the whole of the ordinary necessary ecclesiastical business, including the exercise of discipline, and that each congregation was wholly independent of every other, and subject to no control from any party beyond or without itself.'

APPENDIX B

Some Comments on Mr. Cunningham's Presbyterian Critique of Congregationalism

Mr. Cunningham is helpful in that he draws his readers attention to the fact that there are certain clear principles upon which Congregationalism is founded, and in which it differs from the two other views:

It affirms that each Congregation possesses ordinarily possesses a right to entire and absolute independence in the regulation of all its affairs from other churches, and civil authorities.

It affirms that church members have a role to serve in their own governance, such is not wholly the reserve of church officers.

It is further affirmed that within the local church there are but two classes of church officer, elder and deacon, and no class of officer outside the local church - Bishop, etc.

Concerning the office of presbyter or elder, only in its earliest years did Congregationalists share the Presbyterian distinction between ruling or administrative elders and teaching elders. As the issue becomes more defined in Congregational thought the distinction became explicitly denied - at least in practice.

Mr. Cunningham is unhelpful in the extreme nature of his phraseology. One would get the impression that Congregationalists hold to democracy as a form of church government, they don't. That church officers have no authority in administration and spiritual governance, nothing could be further from the truth. That Congregationalists recognize no external authority but themselves, and therefore just go one their own way. Again this is not true.

He seeks to reduce the validity of the Congregational position by calling it 'modern.' This is a mere polemic. Very little of a sound theological nature came out of the church in the 1100 years prior to the Reformation, and even before that the good was mixed with a lot of bad. If antiquity is the judge, Episcopacy has by far the better claims!

Cunningham's argument from history is weak! He comments, 'It was not until about twenty or thirty years later, near the end of the sixteenth century, that [Congregational] views were brought out and practically acted upon in this country, by some persons who might be considered as offshoots of true original English Puritans, and who were known for a time under the name Brownists. These views have not been embraced to any considerable extent among the churches of Christ, and indeed scarcely by any except the descendants of those who first broached them in this country, and who are more numerous body now in the United States than in Great Britain.

Congregational principles were actually concomitantly engendered from the earliest moments of the Reformation. In

England 'Congregationalists' were never 'offshoots of true original English Puritans,' they were at the heart of that movement from its beginning. As to their views not being 'embraced to any considerable extent,' that is absolutely untrue. In fact in England those Protestants following Congregational principles (Congregationalists, Baptists, Methodists) increasingly dominated, till 1851 when it was feared the overall numbers attending Sunday worship would exceed the Church of England. That was the last year the national census asked questions on one's place of worship!

His comments on John Owen take with the left hand what they give with the right. His most concessionary statement, however, is made in reference to early church history. 'It is true, likewise, that, in the history of modern ecclesiastical literature, there is a good deal to which Independents may not unreasonably refer, as affording pretty strong presumptions, so far a mere authority goes, in favor of their peculiar views. I allude here particularly to the fact, that several very eminent investigators of the history of the church, who did not themselves make a profession of Congregational principles, have conceded that the practice of the early church, from the times immediately succeeding the apostles was either wholly or in great measure in accordance with that of the Congregationalists. Instances of this are Sir Peter King, afterwards Lord Chancellor, Mosheim, Dr. Campbell of Aberdeen, and Neander. These men have all made statements in regard to the constitution and government of the primitive church, which Independents are fairly entitled to plead, as affording some countenance to the peculiar views which they hold in opposition to Presbyterians, though, at the same time, it should be noted, as holding true of all these men, that they did not regard apostolic practice upon this subject as binding upon the church in succeeding ages.'

The last sentence is the most important, and ought to be tenaciously clung to by ourselves, for here Cunningham admits that the very early church was governed by Congregational principles, note his 'escape clause,' 'it should be noted, as holding true of all these men, that they did not regard apostolic practice upon this subject as binding upon the church in succeeding ages.' What are we to make of that? He confesses then that 'the post apostolic church was Congregational, but,' he says, 'they didn't insist that we have to be, so we wont, we'll be Presbyterian!'

He goes on to confess, 'it must be admitted ... that, for the first century at least, each congregation - that is, the whole of it, and not merely the whole of the office-bearers - transacted in common the whole of the ordinary necessary ecclesiastical business, including the exercise of discipline, and that each congregation was wholly independent of every other, and subject to no control from any party beyond or without itself.'

So now whose view is 'modern'?