ISSUES OF POLITY IN ENGLISH

CONGREGATIONALISM, 1640-1670

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by

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This thesis is dedicated to Drs. Jack L. Arnold and Edwin A. Blum,
my mentors and friends in the work of the ministry.

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CHAPTER I

THE CONTEXT AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The Context of the Study

For seventeenth century Englishmen, the times saw national growth on many levels. New lands were explored and settled, as well as new ideas being tested. The Middle Ages were gone, and with them the Roman Church's domination of British theology. English ecclesiastical Independency developed from sequestered conventicles in 1600 to its open commonness in 1700. However, this study will be confined to a seemingly narrow focus of time of only three decades (1640-1670), when so much happened to set the pace for the next three centuries of English and American Protestant history. In fact, the sect of this study, English Congregationalism, is virtually unrecognizable today as from it's original form. Likewise, American Congregationalism mutated so quickly, that by 1700 it also bore little resemblence to that espoused during the years in question. It is suggested that Congregationalist theories much written upon in these years hardly had the time to mature before circumstances and the nature of men and politics confused them. Nevertheless, that form of English Congregationalism propounded during the years 1640-1670 offered a compromise between the contending forces of Presbyterianism and radical Independency. This is the proposition of this thesis.

The three decades discussed in this paper were indeed the high times for historic English Congregationalism. They include the time of rising Parliamentary dominance, the English Civil War, the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell and the first few years of the Restoration of Charles II, before the passing of the major Congregationalist figures. It was one of the most internally painful periods for England. Many who were prepared to die themselves for the principle of "sola Scriptura" were not prepared to kill their king for it. It is not surprising, then, to find general popular support at the Restoration:

> To some, the end of the Puritan government was a happy occasion. Tuesday, May 29, 1660, saw one of the greatest scenes of joy in London's history. Escorted by troops of splendidly uniformed horsemen and foot soldiers, and announced by the fanfare of trumpets, Charles [II] entered the capital through streets bright with flowers and hanging tapestries.[1]

The Great Ejection of nonconforming ministers in 1662 did much to reverse the effects of the Puritan Protectorate. But it did not kill the movements of the Independents. A great plurality within the Protestant congregations had begun to express itself. Probably the most fruitful garden for toleration was within Cromwell's own New Model Army of the Civil War years. Out of those camps came the Baptists, the Quakers, the Congregationalists and many other lesser independent groups. The Presbyterians fought for Cromwell as well. Cromwell's Protectorate government solidified the legitimacy of Independency as well as Presbyterianism, and it was this period in which the great ecclesiological dialoguing occurred.

The Civil War Years

Our period of study opens with the convening of the Long Parliament on November 3, 1640. Popular sympathy was with Parliament as the reign of Charles I saw war with the Scots, and as the Church of England begin to conform back to the church of Rome. This conformity was expressed in many forced compliances and harassment of dissenting churchmen. In its own growing independency from the crown, Parliament decided to call together an assembly of ecclesiastics purposed "for the settlement of the Government and liturgy of the church of England."[2] It convened at Westminster on July 1, 1643, and the Presbyterian formula which came out of the Assembly is still used today. But five conferees at Westminster (Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, Sidrach Simpson, Jeremiah Burroughs, and William Bridge) appealed that the English church not pattern itself on the Scottish church alone, but should make allowance for independent congregations. John Cotton, a founding father of Congregationalism, expressed this sentiment in the preface to his Keys of the Kingdom (1644),

> As for ourselves, we are yet, neither afraid, nor ashamed to make profession . . . that the substance of this brief extract . . . is that very middle way (which in our Apology[3] we did in general intimate and intend) between that which is called Brownisme, and the presbyteriall government . . .[4]

As the decade wore on and the Civil War raged, the camp setting of Oliver Cromwell's New Model Army increasingly set the tone for religious toleration. With the arm of the military setting the precedent, more religious ideas were being discussed

and considered. Geoffrey Nuttall, a leading commentator on our subject, notes,

> The way of tolerance was still in its infancy, indeed the very idea was anathema to most religious people, including the Presbyterians . . . As it was, he [the Protector] persistently used his influence to temper the persecuting zeal which his followers shared with the great mass of the contemporaries.[5]

As the idea of toleration spawned then, it later seems to have spread across the Atlantic and become a principle feature of our American society.

So, in a sense, English Congregationalism was distinguished largely by a desire among its founders for reasonable toleration among orthodox Christians. Positively, there was a general feeling of acceptance among the Congregationalists for almost all other non-Anglican Protestants. Anglican worship was frowned upon for some doctrinal reasons, but it must not be underemphasized that the Book of Common Prayer was "the very badge of Royalism."[6] Political factors abounded.

The present age has a special opportunity to discuss church theory in an environment relatively free of political confusion. But the age under discussion was not so. So when ecclesiastical toleration is discussed, the political parameters must be kept in mind. A common error in the study of church history (indeed _any_ history) is to visit a previous era wearing the clothing of one's own time.

The Protectorate Years

During the Protectorate which occupied the years 1649 to 1660, the distinct ideas of English Congregationalism took root and developed. As noted in a previous paper,

> Congregationalism greatly increased in importance and several Congregationalists were elevated to national prominence. John Owen . . . was probably the profoundest theologian of the period. He was made dean of Christ's Church and vice-chancellor of the University of Oxford. Thomas Goodwin, . . . became president of Magdalen College, Cambridge. Others included John Howe, Philip Nye and Joseph Caryl.[7]

The Savoy Hotel on the Strand marks the site of an important event in early English evangelical independency. At the old Savoy Palace in October of 1658, the First Savoy Conference was held. This Conference was not to have the political ramifications as did that at Westminster. It was attended by some two hundred independents, mostly "lay elders" and represented over one hundred churches. A committee was appointed to prepare the draft of a declaration of faith and church order. By October 12th, the final draft was approved. Most probably, John Owen and Philip Nye penned the preface, and Thomas Goodwin made a speech at the document's presentation to Richard Cromwell (Oliver had died on September 3). In his speech, Goodwin related the purpose behind the conference and the Savoy Declaration, "to clear ourselves of that scandal which not only some persons at home but of foreign parts have affixed on us, viz., that Independentism is the sink of all heresies and schisms."[7] As to doctrinal content, the Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order puts forth orthodox Calvinistic teaching. Much of the Westminster

Confession was agreed upon and adopted as Congregational. It
was then, more the _event_ of the Savoy Conference that proved to
be significant. It was the first synod of modern English-
speaking evangelicalism to gather for the purpose of Scriptural
ecclesiastical definition with a desired minimum of political
factors.

The Savoy Declaration holds some interesting differences
from the Westminster Confession, however. First, there is the
difference on the matter of the authority of the civil magis-
trate. The Congregationalists held that he should not have power
to actually bind men in the exercise of religious liberty. This
was not done strictly out of convenience for their own members
(since this was the time of their own political prominence) but
rather an early glimmer of the idea of separation of church and
state. The Presbyterians were not thus minded at this time.
Secondly, in its section on the Church (XXVI), the Declaration
puts forth an optimistic millenarianism. Toon interprets the
section to mean that Congregationalists were persuaded that the
latter-day glory of the Church would entail Congregational
polity.[9] This suggested connection between church polity and
eschatology is unique, and is largely absent from the Westminster
documents.

There is also a subtle difference on the matter of repen-
tance, the Congregationalists retaining more of a taste for
federal theology, viewing the matter in the light of God's eter-
nal purposes.[10]

But the principle differences lie in the area of polity, and in delineating Congregationalism from Presbyterianism and Anglicanism. More will be said of the comparison of the Declaration and the Confession later.

The Restoration Years

Protectorate Puritanism underwent its stiffest test after the Great Ejection of dissenting and non-conforming ministers in 1662. The Restoration of the crown to Charles II spelled the end of the short-lived Puritan dominance, and stabbed at the legitamacy of ecclesiastical Independency. While the act of Uniformity effectively deprived some two thousand dissenting ministers of their salaries (and some of their civil freedom), it did not kill non-Anglican Protestantism. Now again, as during the Laudian years, Presbyterians and Independents were in the same state. These years before the Act of Toleration of 1689 were years spent in polemical and apologetical writing by Non-Conformists. They were very difficult years, but proved a blessing for the refinement of Congregational thought. American Congregationalism was fast becoming at variance with its English antecedent. (Indeed, it was not long before the Enlightenment would fully mutate American Congregationalism).

During the years up to 1680, John Owen, Thomas Goodwin, Richard Baxter (a Presbyterian) and other prominent churchmen carried on discussions which cultivated Congregational thought. Polity was largely the issue discussed, even during Ejection

years. Specific matters included the question of church participation and membership, the principle of "visibility," the ecclesiological rule of the local church, and supposed relationships between evangelical churches.

The Significance of the Study

Over the course of two millenia of church history and within the broad brush strokes of the history of doctrine, one might be tempted to question the relevance of such a brief period of time as thirty years. But it appears that during the years of 1640-1670 the pace was set in the English church for reasonable and non-radical Independency, the benefit of which many American Evangelical churches draw from today. While it is true that Enlightenment factors greatly influenced early American political thought, it cannot be denied that toleration for various kinds of religious expression began in the period in question. In these years, the toleration propounded was intended to include groups primarily within orthodox (and even Calvinistic) Protestantism. It grew quickly by 1700 to include all manners of Socinianism, humanism, etc., and by that year the same freedom of thought was growing quickly on American soil. So, the effect of this study is to show the impact made by the striving of legitimate Independency on subsequent English and American history.

But a narrower purpose is in view as well. Those issues of polity under scrutiny in the years in question are still being discussed today, with varying fervency, depending on the circles

in which one travels. Among Presbyterians, Reformed Baptists, and the Bible Church and Brethern movements, the issues are kept at the forefront of discussion. Among other Baptists, Pentecostalists and other Protestant groups, the issues seem assumed, but these groups are nonetheless benefactors of the thought and debates in the years 1640-1670. For each of the following chapters, there can be seen an American counterpart-arena today (and English too). The "visibility" issue (Chapter II) clearly touches the "carnal Christian" controversy. The subject of Chapter III, on local church rule, is endlessly discussed in seemingly all but the most autocratic evangelical churches (and publications). Chapter IV speaks to the mergeristic tendencies of today and to the very desirability of merger among like evangelical churches. So, the study holds significance for ecclesiological thinkers of our day. It is hoped that the past reviewed here will hold great stimulus for our present investigations and lead us to a more faithful application of Holy Scripture.

Notes

[1]Robert S. Bosher, The Making of the Restoration Settlement, the Influence of the Laudians, 1649-62, p. 143.

[2]John Brown, Commonwealth England, p. 45.

[3]Robert S. Paul, An Apologeticall Narration (1643), signed by the five mentioned dissenting Westminster conferees.

[4]Larzer Ziff, ed., John Cotton on the Churches of New England, p. 77.

[5]Geoffrey F. Nuttall,"Cromwell's Toleration", in Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society, referred to as TCHS 11 (1950):285.

[6]Ibid. p. 281.

[7]Neil C. Damgaard, "The First Conference at the Savoy, 1658," Studia Theologica Et Apologia (1982):79.

[8]Peter Toon, God's Statesman: The Life and Work of John Owen, p. 104.

[9]Peter Toon, "The Westminster and Savoy Confessions: A Brief Comparison," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 15 (Summer 1972):153.

[10]Ibid.

CHAPTER II

THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL RULE OF VISIBILITY

The Principle of Separation

For twenty centuries, the Church has struggled with the opposing effects of authenticity and hypocricy. The impact of the latter has cost the Church dearly in its witness and potential. "In managing their churches, Christians have inevitably been troubled by the human badness they seek to overcome."[1] The problem of false Christianity began early in Church history: "They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us," (I John 2:19, NASB). And the problem of true spiritual identity continues down to today. But it is instructive to consider this issue in the context of fledgling English evangelicalism, and how it was dealt with. This brings us to a distinctive feature of English Congregationalism.

In the sixteenth century, the earliest years of the English Reformation, there arose the Puritan movement. The term "Puritan" was originally something of a contemptuous derision given to non-conforming dissenting English churchmen, who wanted a pure Church--completely cleansed of Roman influence and

theological confusion. As Independent Puritanism developed, several names came to be associated with the attendant Separatism: Robert Browne, John Robinson and John Cotton. These men propagated the principle of separation (but surely not isolation) from the world, even though the world can manifest itself in the Church. These men perceived the Presbyterians as clearly Reformed, but still not separated enough.

As Congregationalism (as it came to be called after 1640) developed, the emphasis moved to holiness as well as theological orthodoxy. The insistence was that "living doctrine springs from personal experience of the grace of Jesus Christ as made known to us in Scripture and of His continuing presence in the fellowship of the Church."[2] To these churchmen, it was plain that the visible church in England stood far from being that invisible Church understood from Augustine and others as that true Body of elect people, the Bride of Christ. It seemed to them that England's visible church "indiscriminately embraced the flagrantly wicked along with the good or sincerely repentant."[3] Therefore, they conceived of something quite different--of an ideal process of "in-churching," where saints would freely walk together in the ways of God and bind themselves together to stand fast in that freedom. The "rule of visibility" related to lives being lived free of blatant sin and positively growing in Christ, not to show off one's piety, but to encourage one another. The church covenant was one means to that end.

The heart of the church theory was the church covenant. Regenerate men, the theory ran, acquire a liberty to observe God's commanding will, and when a company of them are met together, and can satisfy each other that they are men of faith, they covenant together, and out of their compact create a church . . . there can be no true church until there is a covenant of the saints, submitting to the rule of Christ in public observance out of their free and regenerated wills.[4]

Therefore, it is the church covenant which began and formally constituted a local congregational church.

The most prominent spokesman for the movement came to be Dr. John Owen, and any study of this period of the Church should reckon with him. As discussion and definition carried on over the nature of the true church, Owen wrote much of a polemical nature defending Congregational views. He offers,

The Church of Christ living in this world . . . is taken in Scripture three wayes.

1. For the Mystical body of Christ, his Elect, Redeemed, Justifyed and Sanctifyed ones throughout the world, commonly called the Church-Catholick-militant.

2. For the Universality of men throughout the world, called by the preaching of the word, visibly professing and yielding obedience to the Gospell; called by some the Church-Catholick-visible.

3. For a particular church of some place, where the instituted worship of God in Christ is celebrated acccording to his minde . . .[5]

There was also a passion in Owen for the free worship of Independents:

You know how many in this very nation in the days not long since passed, yea how many thousands left their native soyle, and went into a vast and Howling wilderness in the utmost parts of the world, to keep their soules undefiled and chast to their deare Lord Jesus, as to this of his worship and institution.[6]

So, as the Separatists articulated a distinct concept of the basic nature of the Church, Congregationalism was embracing an empassioned desire for purity. John Rogers, ministering in 1653 to the Congregational church meeting in Christ Church Cathedral, defined the "true Church of Christ" as:

> 1. A society of Believers sanctified in Christ Jesus;
> 2. separate from the world, false-ways, and worships. . . ;
> 3. having the special presence of God, in the midst of her;
> 4. and being gathered and ordered by Christ's rule alone;
> 5. all her members freely, and voluntarily, embodying without the least compulsion (having communion with the Father and the Son); 6. all seeking the same End, viz. the Honor and glory of God in his worship.[7]

It is clear then, that these Congregationalists desired something more than mere religion. They wanted a church uninhibited and unstained by the world around them. And they desired to remain separate from the churches available to them. It was not largely out of pride but out of a commitment to what they perceived to be a truely Biblical ecclesiology.

The Principle of Fellowship

The concept of "fellowship" is something the American church today is tempted to take for granted. It is a word with a wide variety of ecclesiastical meanings. It is an evangelical word, regularly incorporated into discipleship training, and given an important place of discussion. It is used theologically as in I John 1:3c, "our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." Or it can be used to describe the event of sharing a cup of coffee in the church "fellowship" hall. But for the Congregationalists under study, it was a distinct feature

of emphasis and holds again, a specific meaning. Presbyterians
of the era did not generally articulate the matter.[8] It became
the task for the Congregationalists to recover the New Testament
concept of embodiment. Again, the idea of the church covenant is
significant. It is the document of separation, but more
importantly the document of positive commitment to the local
assembly. The covenant was something of a social contract, drawn
up by existing (or potential) church leaders and actually signed
by church members. The act held no mystical power for them, nor
was it viewed as a "sword of Damocles," but rather served as a
documentary basis for the adhering of like-doctrine, and
commitment to one another. Two examples will illustrate the
intention of such documents:

> We whose names are here subscribed do resolve and engage by
> the help of the Spirit of God to walk in all the ways of
> God so far forth as he hath revealed or shall reveal them
> unto us by his word, and in all duties of love and
> watchfulness each to other as becomes a church of Christ.[9]

And,

> Wee doe agree to give up ourselves vnto ye Lord in profound
> subiection to his Gospell, and promise by the help of his
> grace, wherevpon wee trust, to walke together in his hold
> ordinance & wayes, to watch over one another in love, and to
> submitt to the government of Christ in this society.[10]

These selections (among several given by Nuttall) reveal a primi-
tive kind of affection and gravity for purity and commitment. It
was not a day conducive to dissenter church planting, and the
groups were generally small.

In view of later American Congregationalism known for
its rigidity, these early English documents bespeak a sweeter

kind of communion, though less sophisticated in their lucidness. It is this kind of "in-churching" that characterized these Congregationalists. This desire permeated all aspects of their polity. It affected the choice of pastors and other leaders; it affected the tone of internal dealings among themselves; and it surely staved off absorption by Presbyterianism. Surely, the movement's proponents struggled with their own brand of problems, but they were attempting to hammer out an ecclesiology which they believed had been lost for centuries. These ground-breaking efforts in the three brief decades given to them, reaped benefits for countless evangelicals on both sides of the Atlantic. These benefits even reach down to this day.

Notes

[1] Edmund S. Morgan, Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea, p. 1.

[2] Geoffrey F. Nuttall, The Puritan Spirit, p. 63.

[3] Morgan, p. 10.

[4] Perry Miller, quoted in Geoffrey F. Nuttall, The Early Congregational Conception of the Church, in TCHS 15 (1956), from The New England Mind, pp. 399, 435.

[5] John Owen, Of Schism, in The Works of John Owen, 13:167.

[6] John Owen, Of Communion With God, in Vol.   of The Works of John Owen, p. 170.

[7] John Rogers, quoted in Geoffrey F. Nuttall, Visible Saints, The Congregational Way, 1640-1660, p. 73, from Ohel or Beth-shemesh . . . An Idea of Church-Discipline, in the Theorick and Practick Parts, 1653.

[8] With some exceptions, i.e. Richard Baxter, an uncommon Presbyterian, who wrote copiously on the subject. Cf. for example, The Practical Works of Richard Baxter, 1:595ff.

[9] Part of the second covenant (Dec. 21, 1648) of the church at Bury St. Edmunds, from Nuttall, Visible Saints, the Congregational Way, 1640-1660, p. 79.

[10] The covenant from the group at Market Weston (later Wattisfield) from Sept. 14, 1654, Ibid.

CHAPTER III

LOCAL CHURCH RULE: PRESBYTERIAN OR CONGREGATIONAL?

This chapter shall address the question of local church rule, as developed by English Congregationalists during the years of study. It is seen that two fundamental problems of definition have faced church leaders. First, is the possession of leadership authority in a church, and its sumultaneous denial by the person in leadership. This is illustrated by Baptist theory which often denies the validity of real authority in deacons, when the deacons are really the ones in control of a church (the theory will state that the pastor is the single elder).[1]

Conversely, there is the problem of a hollow, or official authority, granted theoretically to an elder board but insufficiently evidenced in practice. This can be illustrated in some Presbyterian-type churches where the result has been a crisis of leadership and a deterioration of "ethos." Ethos is defined from a rhetorical standpoint, as the opinion held by the audience of the speaker as a person.[2] Here it is applied as the perceived credibility of the church leadership on the part of the flock. An elder board can hold constitutional power and authority, but because of low ethos, be ineffective. This was a central issue in the English Reformation on the whole, where the clergy and

church hierarchy were often questioned for their integrity or ability. Even more so, it was the reason for the ejection of a good many Establishment ministers during Cromwell's Protectorate.3

So, with a temporary freedom in England to further define and refine polity, the Congregationists attempted to provide a middle way. In the opinion of this writer, the Scriptures do not seem to clearly favor one polity over another, although both those who advocated the acceptance of Scottish Presbyterianism and the adherents of the Congregational way were firmly convinced that their own view of the church was closest to the Scriptural pattern. In the book of Acts (and elsewhere), there are ample references to local church elders (Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 4, 22, 23; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18) and yet there are surely also clear examples of a more centralized strong individual leadership. The task appears to be the application of a biblical balance--a putting into practice of Scripturally-grounded principles of church leadership rather than the exegetical extraction from the New Testament of a dominant polity. This was clearly in the minds of the English Congregationalist churchmen, as they tried to strike a balanced, compromising position between the benefits of Independency and Presbyterianism.

Presbyterian Rule

Many positive observations can and should be made about the Presbyterian movement. In the opinion of this writer, no

single Protestent movement has so consistently displayed the credibility of non-Catholic New Testament ecclesiology. This is not to overlook certain failings in the movement's four hundred year history, but on the whole Presbyterianism has seemed to recover much of the New Testament emphasis on ecclesiology. Basic issues of ecclesiology were agreed upon by Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Baptists. The distinctives of Presbyterianism are in view here. It is interesting that when Toleration came in 1689, the Presbyterians in England did not set up a hierarchy of church courts like that established in Presbyterianism elsewhere. In reality, classical Presbyterianism never fully developed on English soil. But the theory was expounded well in the period of study. In his excellent article, Charles E. Surman refers to the 1645 document entitled The Form of Presbyterial Church-Government and of Ordination of Ministers Agreed Upon by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster. It sets alongside the parish presbytery, and superior to it, the "Classical Assembly," made up of delegates from local presbyteries in a defined area and, as Surman notes, "in theory not more than four nor less than two elders from each congregation, in addition to the minister."[4] The purposes of the Assembly were (1) to exercise general oversight concerning the character and conduct of ministers and elders, (2) to examine candidates for the ministry and elders, (3) to keep in touch with the current state of individual congregations, (4) to decide cases of discipline, and appeals thereof, and (5) to meet monthly in the discharge of the above. But the

known records of any Assemblies functioning in this time are few at best.

Nevertheless, the English Presbyterians considered themselves closely allied with those in Scotland. In a letter from a few years after this study's period (written between 1700 and 1705), Isaac Watts states:

> The true and original notion of presbytery is, that God hath appointed a synod, or class, or assembly of ministers, or elders, to be superior in power and government to any particular church or officers thereof. 2d, that these synods or councils have power ministerially to determine controversies in faith and discipline, and that any person in a church may appeal to them for any injury received from any church, etc., but this opinion is almost worn off in England.[5]

This is no confessional statement of course, but does seem to capture the intent of the Presbyterian expression of hierarchy. The Westminster Confession (Chapters 30 and 31) states simply that,

> The Lord Jesus, as king and head of his Church, hath therein appointed a government in the hand of Church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate.[6]

and,

> For the better government and further edification of the church, there ought to be such assemblies as are commonly called synods or councils. . . . It belongs to synods and councils, ministerially, to determine controversies of faith, and cases of conscience; to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the public worship of God, and government of his Church; to receive complaints in cases of maladministration, and authoritatively to determine the same . . [7]

The confession thus recognizes the possibility of error on the part of councils but commends them as a <u>help</u> in faith and practice. Presbyterianism did not address its local churches with a view to lording it over them. English Presbyterianism, in the

opinion of Roger Thomas, always had (up to 1700) a streak of Independency in its makeup.[8] Thomas notes a distinction made between "Presbyterian dependent" and "Presbyterian independent" by Alexander Gordon. Gordon observed that in Presbyterianism independent the individual parish congregations maintained their independence, and synods or classes were for consultation and advice rather than for government. It was not the full independency coming forth from Congregationalism, but much closer to it than would have been known in Scotland. Thomas states:

> In any case Presbyterianism independent was characteristic of English Presbyterianism in the time . . . before the Civil War. Perhaps the need to operate [still] within the framework of the traditional Anglican system had something to do with it. Indeed the chief distinctive feature of English Presbyterian ideas at this early date was rather the institution of ruling elders than any liking for a system of synods.[9]

Later, for the last half of the seventeenth century, the thinking of English Presbyterians was deeply influenced by the powerful lead given by Richard Baxter. Thomas again notes,

> He [Baxter] disliked ruling elders--lay elders he called them--because he disliked the intrusion of lay management into church affairs and thought that the government of the parish should be in the hands of its fully ordained ministry.[10]

As to synods, Baxter was very influential in his proposals more for ministerial associations. His views resulted in the publication in 1691 of a document called "Heads of Agreement Assented to by the United Ministers in and about London: Formerly called Presbyterian and Congregational," where the authority of the ministerial association was moral alone and without jurisdic-

tion. A precedent for such an association of ministers was Baxters' Worcestershire Association of 1653, where "our business is not now . . . to reconcile differences in judgment: . . . but to practice unanimously so much as we are agreed in."[11] The context involved mutual recognition of church discipline.

This kind of an association-movement spread to other counties (some sixteen at least) as the Restoration approached.[12] The idea was new among Presbyterians and met with delight among Congregationalists, still fighting to establish their own legitamacy.

All of this is given, because Congregationalism cannot really be understood apart from the backdrop of Presbyterianism. It seems to this writer that Congregationalism stands as a refinement of Presbyterianism, and chiefly so in the area of polity. Robert S. Paul is of the opinion that in the period of study, the systems of government of Presbyterianism and Congregationalism were if anything more similar than they are today, as to the employment of pastors, teachers, ruling elders and deacons. But, Paul notes, the difference lay in the exercise of authority:

> But this power [of the ministry] was spiritual and not coercive: it was derived from the example of a ministry, and not from the pattern of the Civil State. Behind it there was the example of the One who spoke with authority, but who had refused to use the sword. For this reason, authority within the Church must be exercised with great care,[13] "that when we seek to pluck up tares, we pluck not up wheat also."[14]

Other Presbyterian distinctives of the period included: (1) the willingness to establish a State Church (if Presbyter-

ian), (2) ordination of ministers by laying on of hands, (3) agreement with use of some liturgy such as "the Directory," (though not to its imposition), and (4) contentment with the allignment of the Lord's Table with axis North and South.[15]

English Presbyterianism seems to have generally developed a stricter order. As compared to Anglicanism and Lutheranism, it offered a more Reformed approach to Englishmen. And yet, to some educated churchmen, it still lacked some of the more "experimental" elements of what they saw in the New Testament. Not the least of these was in the basic way in which their local churches should be ruled. To that exposition this study will now turn.

Congregational Rule

In modern evangelical circles, the term "Congregational rule" has often become synonymous with a democratic process in the church where all strategic decisions are made by the vote of the local congregation as a whole. This idea can only partially claim English Congregationalism as its first home. In that the authority of the church resides within each local church as an autonomous unit, the term "Congregational form of government" is indeed historical to the period under study. For then, as now, the Congregational view holds that there is no authoritative person or organization above the local church except Christ, who is the Head. But as to an intrinsic democratic structure in the church, the matter for the years of this study is not so clear. At this point, Nuttall aptly distinguishes between "right-wing

Congregationalists of a freer established Church as under Cromwell" and "left-wing Congregationalists (and the Baptists)."[16] The distinction is significant in that right-wing Congregationalists, holding to internal government by elders, were contrasted with left-wing Congregationalists (and Baptists) in favor of internal government by all members assembled in the church meeting. Nuttall notes that this last system "undoubtedly owed something to, and also fostered, the rise of the common man into political importance"[17] and elsewhere that "Congregationalism may be seen as one of the earliest attempts in England seriously to work out ecclesiologically the meaning of the Reformation doctrine of the priesthood of all believers."[18] A foundational emphasis seems to have been on the nobility of the ones being ruled in the Church, rather than on the clergy and hierarchy of the Church. Larzer Ziff states that "Congregationalism was an important part of the democratization of Anglo-American life" and illustrates this in his review of John Cotton's Keys of the Kingdom (1644). Ziff says:

> Cotton is here [Ch. 7, Keys] talking about the Christian rights of saints, not about the liberty of the people in a state of nature, a term which to him would have meant a state of damnation. But he is insisting, as others would argue about civil authority, that all church authority initially resides in the believer, is only delegated by them, and must ultimately be referred back to them.[19]

John Cotton remains a key figure to be reckoned with in the matter of local church rule. Although he died in 1652, his work of definition and defense would be carried on by perhaps the greatest Congregational doctor, John Owen. Owen's own trek from

Presbyterianism to Congregationalism is significant. Before 1644, he had not really had occasion to investigate the claims of Independency. But, as he describes in what follows, Cotton indeed made an impression on him.

> Not long after [the publication of The Duty of Pastors] I set myself seriously to inquire into the controversies then warmly agitated in these nations. Of the Congregational way I was not acquainted with any one person, minister, or other; nor had I to my knowledge, seen any more than one in my whole life. My acquaintence lay wholly with ministers and people of the Presbyterian way. But sundry books being published on either side, I perused and compared them with the Scripture and with one another according as I received ability from God. After a general view of them, as way my manner in other controversies, I fixed on one to take under peculiar consideration and examination, which seemed most methodically and strongly to maintain that which was contrary, as I thought, to my present persuasion. This was Mr. Cotton's book of The Keys. The examination and confutation hereof, merely for my own particular satisfaction, with what diligence and sincerity I was able, I engaged in. What progress I made in that undertaking I can manifest unto any by the discourses on that subject and animadversions on that book yet abiding by me. In my pursuit and management of this work, quite beside and contrary to my expectation, at a time and season wherein I could expect nothing on that account but ruin in this world, without the knowledge or advice of, or conference with any person of that judgment, I was prevailed upon to receive that and those principles which I had thought to have set myself in an opposition unto.[20]

Now for this study, this account is somewhat parenthetic. It is given though to illustrate the impact and importance of John Cotton, and the receptibility of Congregational ideas in the minds of some Presbyterians. But it is needful now to turn to some other specifics surrounding the idea of Congregational rule in the years before us.

A very useful source is found in Editor K. W. H. Howard's annotated edition of The Axminster Ecclesiastica, 1660-1698,

first published in 1874. Appendix G in this edition, entitled "The Axminster Churchmanship" offers a succinct and interesting review of Congregational practices at the church there, founded in 1660, and first pastored by Bartholomew Ashwood (1622-1678). The Axminster church serves as an excellent illustration of how Congregational polity was displaying itself. Howard describes the Axminster church under sixteen headships, which aptly outline the general ecclesiological distinctives there. They are listed as follows:

1. Regulative Principle (confessional authority).
2. Essence of a church.
3. Form of a church.
4. Receiving members.
5. Membership discipline.
6. Dismission of members.
7. Withdrawal of members.
8. Church officers.
9. Pastors and Teachers.
10. Ruling elders.
11. Deacons.
12. Ordinances.
13. Baptism.
14. The Lord's Supper.
15. Church meetings.
16. Synods and councils.[21]

Sections 8-11, 14 and 15 relate strictly to polity and
set forth, quoting from Axminster records, some particulars which
were practiced. These include: congregational election of church
officers, recognition of previous ministerial ordination, agree-
ment with John Owen on the description of ruling elders (Owen's
True Nature of a Gospel Church), the occasional practice of
elevation from diaconate to eldership, and the the opposition to
judicial powers of superior eccleciastical assemblies, but
decidedly without a spirit of isolationism.

Again, only later did "Congregational rule" come to imply
Congregational domination in the movement's churches. Its main
importance concerns congregational input in the churches, since
the presence of, and job descriptions for elders were essentially
the same as those in Presbyterianism. It has been noted that the
intent of the English Congregationalist apologists was to display
an ecclesiology where the elders' and ministers' authority was
spiritual indeed, but not necessarily coercive. Since the mem-
bership of a church was designed to officially include only
"visible saints," brought into fellowship upon their profession
and evidence of Christian experience, the character of leadership
is consistent. It corresponds to a theoretical body of believers
who all desire the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives, and
the will of God in and for their church. What the Presbyterians
did not generally do, and the Congregationalists did (and again,
the Baptists), was to draw up and sign church covenants when a
church was formed ("inchurching", "embodying"). Also consistent

with the ecclesiolgy was the Congregational practice of occasion-
ally encouraging preaching by unordained "gifted brethren." This
was not customary among Presbyterians of the time.[22] Also, while
Presbyterian use of liturgy was not uncommon, the Congregational-
ists (and Baptists) were opposed to it as such, in the interests
of free or "conceived" prayer as led by the Holy Spirit during
worship.[23] This is an issue still around today, and the Congre-
gational emphasis on an open kind of worship seems much like that
in modern so-called "brethren" circles in North America.

The Savoy Declaration

Central to the history of this period was the appearance
of the Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order, in 1658. This work,
a collection of three documents, was the first official statement
by a body of Congregational divines and is much more comprehen-
sive than the earlier "Apologeticall Narration" of 1643. It was
the product of the first Savoy Conference[24], 1658, attended by
some two hundred Congregational churchmen at the Savoy Palace in
London (where, incidentally, Geoffrey Chaucer wrote many of his
poems). The principal contributors to the writing of the docu-
ments included Philip Nye, Thomas Goodwin, John Owen, William
Bridge, William Greenhill and Joseph Caryl; (Nye, Goodwin and
Bridge were signatories of the "Apologeticall Narration"). Nye
was probably the moderator of the Conference, and Owen the secre-
tary. The three documents making up the Declaration include a
lengthy Preface, a confession of faith and a church polity. The

Preface is felt by Brian G. Armstrong to be notable "only for its verbosity and tolerant spirit."[25] It is believed that the Preface was penned by John Owen, and again points to his centrality as a tolerant, moderating figure in these years. The Preface is well ordered and well reasoned. The confession adopted much of the Westminster Confession, but made changes in the section on the Church, the power of the civil magistrate, Christian liberty, and certain deletions from Westminster's section on marriage. The polity section, some thirty paragraphs, clearly establishes complete autonomy for the local church under the headship of Christ alone. As Armstrong notes, the confessional section became more or less standard in New England Congregationalism.[26]

Surprised at their own unanimity, the conferees (representing about one hundred and twenty churches) felt that they were experiencing "a great and special work of the holy Ghost" (the Preface). The Declaration has met with varied responses by ecclesiastical chroniclers. R. W. Dale assessed it as "perhaps the most admirable statement of the ecclesiastical principles of English Congregationalism."[27] Other reactions included skepticism (Richard Baxter, 1696)[28], complete omission from a list of creeds (G. H. Curteis, 1871, and Henry Bettenson, 1944 [but since included in a later edition])[29], and very faint praise (Albert Peel, 1931, and W. A. Curtis, 1911)[30].

Regardless of whether the Savoy Declaration retains an abiding impact or not (and this writer believes that it does), it is evident that the event of the first Savoy Conference[31] was

historically most significant. It signalled the beginning of an age of attempted resolution of ecclesiology between Presbyterian and Baptistic emphases. It was characterized by a decided will for toleration on certain ecclesiological matters between orthodox and Calvinistic churchmen. And it produced an effective and useful refinement on the already eminent Westminster Confession. The event of the Conference however was quickly shrouded in the complex and rapid series of ecclesistical events to follow in the remaining decades of the seventeenth century. Indeed today, the event is scarcely remembered, although it was the "pro terminus" of a new era in the discussion of Protestant church rule. What is said of John Cotton's writings on church polity holds true for the thirty years under examination in this study, which speak "more directly to twentieth-century concerns about liberty and authority," and make clear that discussions about ecclesiastical polity were "not hair-splitting antiquarian squabbles but central debates about the terms on which men in England and America would live with one another."[32] It later became evident that Presbyterianism would never become the controlling system in the New England colony, and that Congregationalism would never become the controlling system in England. Since both parties were united in Christian essentials, the time had come to explore ways of living together so that both might turn their attention to the destroyers of doctrine quickly becoming entrenched in English theology.

Notes

[1]Philip Schaff, Creeds of Christendom, 3:739, 747. This point is implied in the New Hampshire Confession of Faith, and stated in the Philadelphia Confession.

[2]Donald R. Sunukjian, "The Credibility of the Preacher", Bibliotheca Sacra, Vol. 139, No.555, (July-September 1982):256.

[3]Geoffrey F. Nuttall, "Cromwell's Toleration", in TCHS, Vol. 11, (1950):281.

[4]Charles E. Surman, "Presbyterianism Under The Commonwealth, The Wirksworth Classis Minutes, 1651-1658", in TCHS, Vol. 15 (1956):164.

[5]Roger Thomas, "The Difference Between Congregational and Presbyterian in the Chapel-Building Age",in TCHS, Vol. 19, (1964):29.

[6]Schaff, p.667.

[7]Ibid, pp.668, 669.

[8]Thomas, Ibid. The quote is from Alexander Gordon's article, "English Presbyterianism" in Christian Life, 1888, p.597, for which no other publication data is given.

[9]Ibid, p.30.

[10]Ibid.

[11]This is from a document published in 1653 entitled Christian Concord, believed to have been penned by Richard Baxter, and is quoted in Earl Kent Brown's Ph.D. dissertation, Richard Baxter's Contribution to the Comprehension Controversy, p. 19.

[12]E. K. Brown, p.27.

[13]Robert S. Paul, An Apologeticall Narration, p.116.

[14]Paul quotes here from Irenicum, To the Lovers of Truth and Peace,(1646), by Jeremiah Burroughes, an Independent signatory of the Westminster Confession.

[15]Geoffrey F. Nuttall, "Relations Between Presbyterians and Congregationalists in England", in TCHS, Vol.19, (1964):4,5.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Geoffrey F. Nuttall, The Puritan Spirit, p.58.

[19]Larzer Ziff, John Cotton on the Churches of New England, p.28

[20]Toon, p.27, from the Works of John Owen, 13:223.

[21]K.W.H. Howard, The Axminster Ecclesiastica, 1660-1698, pp. 231-61.

[22]Nuttall, "Relations Between Presbyterians and Congregationalists in England", p.5.

[23]Ibid.

[24]See the article referred to in Note 6, Chapter I.

[25]Brian G. Armstrong,"The Savoy Declaration", in New International Dictionary of the Christian Church, p.880.

[26]Ibid.

[27]R. W. Dale, History of English Congregationalism, p.386.

[28]W. Gordon Robinson, "The Savoy Declaration of 1658 and To-day", TCHS, Vol.19, (1964):78.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Ibid.

[31]The conference held in 1661 at the Savoy between Richard Baxter, et al, and the Anglicans, is usually referred to as the Savoy Conference.

[32]Larzer Ziff, p.30.

CHAPTER IV

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CONGREGATIONALISM AND PRESBYTERIANISM

The problem exists for independent evangelical churches of all ages to determine what kind and quantity of relationships they will sustain to other churches in their respective areas. Here again, two excessive tendencies seem to work their way into many churches. One is Enlightenment-incubated mergerism, and the other is radical separatism. Mergeristic tendencies seem to have seen their birth in the last half of the 1600's when toleration for non-Establishment ideas grew. A spirit of mergerism increased in the late 1700s as the Enlightenment seemingly displaced divine revelation with perceived reason. As the concept of Scriptural absolutes decayed, the necessity for retaining fine points of distinction also disappeared. Hence the desire arose in affected churches and denominations to unify for the apparent good gained in pooling resources and presenting a consolidated front.

The reverse liability appears as radical separatism. Here distinctions are magnified, as division and subdivision occur within various traditions based upon those distinctions, and individualized isolation grows. English Congregationalism arose out of a more reasonable (and ecclesiastically necessary) motivation. Their separation militated upon a more basic theo-

logical distinction, the matter of final binding authority.
B. R. White observes:

> The practice of congregational autonomy among the English
> Separatists has much in common with earlier Anabaptist com-
> munities of believers but seems less likely to derive from
> them than from elements in the English situation. During the
> 1570s and later the Presbyterian Puritans were stressing
> parity of ministers and the right of their congregations,
> with certain safeguards, to choose their own ministers. What
> could be more natural than for the separatists, seeking a
> rationale for their own withdrawal from the Established
> Church and the authority of their covenanted group of the
> committed ["visible"], to stress the same principles suffi-
> ciently to establish congregational autonomy? Arising from
> this was the emphasis, so characteristic of developed English
> Separatism, upon the immediacy of the risen Christ committed
> to each individual fellowship of believers. The most that
> could be reasonably argued in this context, is that the
> Separatist position arose from an appeal to the same Biblical
> authority and in somewhat similar circumstances to that of
> the early Anabaptists.[1]

White's point is simply that Biblical grounds for ecclesiology
were being contended for in the early English Separatistic tradi-
tion, establishing the common historical ground between Presby-
terian and Independent Puritans. Their foundation rested on the
same basic issue: was, or was not the Bible the final rule in
faith and practice? They both were agreed that it surely was.
And during Laudian years, the theological alliance remained
basically intact.

The problems arose amidst the political confusions of the
1640s when intolerance bred quickly. Though ecclesiastical
tolerance made brief (but lasting) advances under Cromwell's
oversight, mutual fellowship across denominational lines was
minimal. Again, royal ordinance in 1662 demanded conformity to
Anglican ways and hindered cooperation between non-Anglican

Protestants. But discussions continued, and those held between John Owen and Richard Baxter are most interesting. They reveal a keen awareness on the part of those involved for the significance of evangelical unity.

Owen and Baxter

During the 1660s, a well-developed spectrum within Puritanism became evident. Thomas Manton represented the older Presbyterian line holding "the fine ideal of the one Church containing all the Protestant Christians and ministers of the nation."[2] John Owen had become the chief spokesman for Congregational polity. And Richard Baxter surfaced in the role of mediating quasi-Presbyterian. These last years (for this study) saw the unfolding of what came to be known as "the comprehension controversy," during which attempts were made to consolidate the Puritan movement. The Great Ejection had occurred in 1662, and ways of resolving it were being sought. Comprehension of Presbyterians into the Church of England was discussed. The Savoy Conference of 1661 reflected this. And other conferences were held toward the same end, plus possible toleration of Independents outside.[3] But political and other factors stayed any progress made towards toleration. Parliament was in no mood to make concessions to Nonconformists, and it became evident to Owen and other observers that Manton and Baxter were fighting a losing battle. In 1668, Baxter turned his attention to the unity of Congregationalists with his brand of Presbyterianism. K. W. H. Howard suggests:

Sheer force of circumstance compelled many Presbyterians to constitute what amounted to gathered churches in practice, while renouncing the idea in theory. On the other hand, many Independent churches were themselves governed by elders, while sternly refusing all aspects of synodical government.[4]

For fifteen months, Owen and Baxter carried on a correspondence towards the unity of Protestant Dissenters. But too broad a gulf existed between them over what to do with unity once obtained. Toon observes that,

> Baxter's ideal and aim was to unite Protestant Nonconformists so that together they could present a strong front to the government and then gain entry on generous terms into the Church of England. Owen, on the other hand, believed just as firmly in the unity of Protestant Dissenters but he wanted them united outside a Church which had too many "marks of the beast" to be an acceptable National Church. . . . Owen wanted a firm, confessional basis for any union whilst Baxter preferred and would have accepted a minimum doctrinal statement.[5]

So while the Owen-Baxter discussions did not effect any binding unity between the parties, it did show the growing mentality of recognition of a common Reformed faith. John Owen was fully disinterested in any comprehensive merger if it involved a dissolution of Congregational dogma. But the need to present a unified Nonconformity continued as a perceived priority.[6]

Other Attempts at Cooperation

In 1669, a "Lecture" was held at Hackney, the lecturers being three Presbyterians (Peter Sterry, Thomas Watson, and William Bates) and four Congregationalists (Philip Nye, George Griffith, Thomas Brookes, and John Owen).[7] This began a period of increased cooperation between Congregationalists and Presbyterians, which would culminate in the "Happy Union" of 1690.

Unfortunately, this union broke down, according to Peel and Nuttall over the doctrinal distinction.[8] In later decades, other attempts were made on both sides of the Atlantic and have continued into this century.[9]

This chapter began with the brief suggestion that Independent evangelical churches face two destructive influences: an ecumenical kind of mergerism and radical separation resulting in an isolationist mind-set. Bible churches, "Brethren" fellowships, and other independent groups face these today, as did the English Congregationalists in the years 1640-1670. The field today, of course, includes much more than just Reformed Presbyterianism. But the processes and discussions which occurred between orthodox evangelical churchmen during the years 1640-1670 hold many lessons for modern evangelicals. The questions of Reformed Presbyterian distinctions, potential fellowship with them and even comprehension by them, remain provocative. In conclusion, Peter Toon's evaluation is helpful:

> While an independent church may have an excellent preacher and/or pastor, be involved in mission, and enjoy good fellowship, it can never gain the historical dimension of continuity. Of necessity, in an independent church this must be absent.[10]

Notes

[1]B. R. White, The English Separatist Tradition, pp. 162, 163.

[2]Peter Toon, God's Statesman, p. 135.

[3]Ibid., p. 134.

[4]K. W. H. Howard, The Axminster Ecclesiastica, 1660-1698, p. 188.

[5]Toon, pp. 135-136.

[6]It is interesting that in 1665 when a Baptist church was formed in Boston, the General Court passed various laws for the restraint of Baptists. Owen wrote two letters exhorting the Governor and church of Massachusetts to toleration, but unfortunately they produced no immediate cessation of the laws. From Peter Toon, The Correspondence of John Owen, (1616-1683), pp. 145-146.

[7]Albert Peel, "Co-operation of Presbyterians and Congregationalists: Some Previous Attempts", in TCHS, Vols. 12 & 13 (1950):156.

[8]Geoffrey F. Nuttall, "Relations Between Presbyterians and Congregationalists in England", in TCHS, Vol. 19 (1964):4.

[9]Peel, p. 147.

[10]Peter Toon, God's Church For Today, pp. 100-101.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis is one which will prompt further reflection on the issues involved. It is freely admitted that the subject of this thesis reflects the personal search of its writer for a polity which is both workable and faithful to the Scripture. Also, this writer believes that the period under examination offers our own age a laboratory of study in several central issues of polity. Issues which many evangelicals in this century grapple with, were directly spoken to during the polemics of 1640-1670. The conclusions drawn from the study relate to an exegesis of those issues. However, final evaluation and assimilation is not presently possible. One can only hope to prayerfully and slowly implement what wisdom he sees in the struggles of his brothers in Christ in earlier corridors of the Church's history. It is the pious task of Historical Theology to bring the student a little closer to understanding and obeying the will of the Lord for His people, as revealed in Scripture.

Within Protestant history, falls Puritan history, and within that, English Congregational history. This study has focused on thirty seemingly short years in the last locus. In those years, central issues of polity were discussed and

developed. Certain conclusions are drawn from that development, and are given under four headings.

The Congregational Advantage

The proposition of this thesis was stated (p. 2) to be that in the years 1640-1670, English Congregationalism came to offer a compromise between the more basic emphases of Presbyterianism and the early English Baptist movement. These Congregationalists emphasized the clear New Testament mandate for "visibility" in the Church's members and practiced the use of church covenants as a means toward maintaining that visibility. Local church autonomy under the Headship of Christ alone seemed a more reasonable balance concerning polity. But that autonomy was never meant to precipitate isolation. The universal Body of Christ was to be recognized and minor differences in doctrinal expression to be tolerated. The Congregational advantage lay in the acceptance of New Testament latitudes in polity.

The Presbyterian Advantage

While the balance offered by English Congregationalist polity has just been noted, it is recognized that an enduring and strong fellowship between English Congregational churches was never fully realized as intended. Presbyterianism offered a certain authority in Presbytery and in the early "classes" which greatly aided in the accomplishment of decisions, made and agreed to by groups of churches. The intrinsic authority of Presbytery helped stave off various heresies, and assisted in guarding

against too much influence by one party or personality. This is inherent in Presbyterian polity and is the advantage which it holds.

The American Scene Today

If one searches for a modern American counterpart to historic English Congregationalism, he will look long to find it. The only noticable group still maintaining the full authority of the Bible and still called Congregational is the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference, and it is rather small as denominations go. But it has been an underlying point in this thesis that there still do exist approximate representations of historic English Congregationalism in America. The roots of the Bible church movement and the Baptist movement are here suggested to extend to the period of study, though some Baptistic variations from Congregationalism are surely found. Also it is suggested that the fellowships known simply as the Brethren ultimately trace to English Congregationalism. Finally, it seems that moderate Reformed Presbyterianism is not altogether different from historic English Congregationalism (noting here that baptism was rarely a disagreement between them).

The Writers of the Period

Much Christian encouragement has been gained through the reading of primary sources in the preparation of this thesis. The English Puritans are sometimes criticized for their verbosity, but if they are occasionally guilty of this, it is far over-

shadowed by the evidence of their deep devotion to discipleship and to the word of God. Perhaps evangelical writers in this age are a bit too abbreviated.

In particular, this writer concludes that the writings of Richard Baxter, Thomas Goodwin, Thomas Manton, and John Owen are exceptional. Their viewpoints sometimes differ, but their love of Jesus Christ and desire to serve Him are equal in all. It would do modern Christians well to purchase their works, take the time and discipline necessary to digest them, and to learn their contributions to Historical Theology.

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PERSONAL COMPUTER MUSEUM

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Philips Micom 2001E

Release Date: **1/1/1981**
Manufacturer: Philips

Donated By: **Shawn Westbrook**

The Micom mini is a bit of an oddity in the 'personal computer museum', but it's just too interesting and too rare to ignore. Sold primarily as a word processing system, the Micom was quite advanced in certain ways for its time. Although a daisy wheel printer was connected to the unit, you could actually do special mathematical symbols and even limited graphics with the unique way that it printed. The unit we have has two 8" floppy drives and the machine actually has filters inside of it (like a furnace) to keep it cool. It's also had the side effect of keeping the unit quite clean over the years. In true mini fashion, the controller itself has no interface and appears to do little on its own. You can connect various operating consoles to it to see it actually work. Shown here, the main console actually looks a lot like the Commodore PET. We have a lot of brochures and instruction manuals which we will be posting here because very little information about this machine is out there on the net. If you know more about this unit, please share with us!

Speed   4 MHz
Memory   128 KB

ADOPT ME

What's this?

This computer is currently interactive in the Museum.

Micom 1001 Terminal

This was an additional terminal that could be connected to the Micom. It had a single LCD line for typing into and allowed information to be listened to from a microcassette for dictation. Or was it a storage device? I think we'll have to try it out to know for sure.

Micom Operator Console

This is the operator console terminal for the Micom 2001E. It looks very similar to the PET computer from Commodore.

User Comments

Alan Fisk on Friday, January 15, 2010
Test post (ignore and delete)

Alan Fisk on Friday, January 15, 2010
Ah, memories! This was the first word processor that I ever used, when I went to work for Micom in Montreal in 1983.

Alan Fisk on Friday, January 15, 2010
Ah, memories! This was the first word processor that I ever used, when I went to work for Micom in Montreal in 1983.

Rick M on Thursday, January 07, 2010
I was a service tech for Micom from 1980 thru 1990 (Vancouver), and worked on the Micom 2000, 2001, 2001E, 2002, 300x, 5040, Qume & TEC printers, and lots more - great system for the time, great software, but in 1982 or so the PC started to end the Micom (Phillips) game. Great memories, too bad you don'thave a picture of the guts of a 2000 system!

Ross Wigle on Thursday, November 26, 2009
I worked for MICOM from 1981-1983 in Hamilton. The MICOM 2001E was the 3rd incarnation of the original MICOM 2000. The 2000 had a controller - similar to the 2001E with 1 or 2 8" 300k floppies, a screen (green lettering on black) and a detached keyboard - big and clunky. After Philips bought MICOM from Steve Dorsey (who also invented the AES system out of word proceesing hotbed Montreal) they added European styling and interated the keyboard into a keyboard/screen console (as you can see in the display) and chnaged the name to the MICOM 2001. By extending the memory to 128k the MICOM 2001E (extended memory) was born. The next incarnation was to push it to 256k and have the controller act as a small distributed system whereby a second screen/keyboard could be attached. This was the birth of the MICOM 2002 "Twin". The idea was that two secretaries could work side by side and share a printer - 45 cps Daisy wheel Qume printers - bi-directional typewriter quality printers with limited graphics capabilities. The printer came in a standard width to accomodate single fed paper up to legal sideways and/or continuous fed paper. It also came with a single or dual sheet feeder whereby 1st pg leterhead could be drawn from tray 1 and second page from tray 2. The printer also came in a wide carriage version for accounting applications and a dual head version to allow for an extended chaacter set used in scientific applications - i.e. greek symbols, etc. Eventually and to a very limited extent the MICOM 2002 "Twin" was pushed to allow 4 terminals to hang from it - all using the one 256k processor. This machine turned out to be an absolute dog and represented the end of distributed processing for the MICOM line. This line also introduced a hard drive. Imagine this: the cost of the hard drive was consistent with the formatting of the drive. I.E. the drive could be formatted for 10,20 and 45 megs and was priced at $10,000, $20,000 and (gasp) $27,000 for the 45 meg - ALL THE SAME DRIVE!! Just formatted differently. With the intro of the 3000 series (3003 - single floppy 64k, 3004 - dual floppy 64k, 3004e dula floppy and 128k, 3005 single floppy, 10 meg drive 128k) also came the MICOM 1001. As discussed in a previous post the concept of this single lined LCD screen system

was to be a low cost data entry terminal that could feed data to the main unit. In theory you could have 10 data entry clerks typing original text into a $2,000 data entry terminal which would then be fed to a main system ($15,000 cost) to be formatted, spell checked, etc. This system never took off and died quickly. The mini cassette tapes were notoriously slow and faulty. The key to the MICOM success story was their software. Prior to the MICOM 2000 coming to market all systems generally used resident software - i.e. one drive always had to house the software disk which in turn would be called upon to perform different functions. The MICOM on the other hand was praised for having "memory resident programs" whereby all of the programming - AND IT WAS REALLY GOOD STUFF AT THE TIME - was held in memory and one or both floopy drives were available for storage, etc. Some of the programs that were available for the MICOM series were: basic WP, math, greek symbols, photocomposition - i.e. acting as an interface to a photocomp system in the printing world, sort, proportional spacing, communications, terminal emulation, spell check (the best one was written by Reid Bodwell in Montreal independently to MICOM - was I believe also used in the TRS80 Radio Shack system. That's it - it was a great system and many years ahead of its time. The major competitors for it in Canada were AES, IBM, Xerox, WANG and in the states NBI, CPT, Lanier (AES with a different cover) all of which did not have software that was as advanced as the MICOM. Unfortunately the MICOM was a great product for only about 7-8 years and then the IBM PC came to market and the rest is history. Ergonomics kicked in with a total redesign of the basic system and the introduction of the MICOM 3000 series utilizing 5 1/4" floppies and eventually a hard drive.

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