

This remarkable work has been reprinted by the Banner of Truth Trust and is something of a "must" reading for the religious history of New England. But apart from my rambling, it shows accurately the sentiment that would soon bind Salem and Plymouth into a united political/theological union.

(1) General concepts seen in Congregationalism

(a) Puritan ideal...it will become tarnished in the passing of time but you can see the thrust of it in the Higginson paragraph quoted earlier.

(b) Non-confessionalism...which was not so apparent at the beginning but becomes increasingly a part of the system...the idea being that confessionalism easily becomes a bind on the local church and the individual Christian denying the broadness of freedom the Congregationalism champions. In theory the idea is that no one church or group of churches can make strictures for another body.

(c) General autonomy...not a "law to oneself" but a governing and regulator body of one's own.

(d) Provincialism...may not be a principle but comes to be so apparent in practice as to suggest it. Singular autonomy often deprives the body of an interest beyond itself.

(e) Idiocentricity...the care of the local unit is the important factor and this will involve the totality of the community if things are ideal. It does not do anything in the way of getting the body to move beyond itself.

You must understand that these are not Congregational principles...I have alluded to these in the preceding paragraph.. but these are essential characteristics witnessed in congregationalism from historic perspective.

(2) Factors shaping the foundations:

(a) the church-state system: the status of "freemen", voting rights, and property ownership.

(b) the general court of Massachusetts which, under the nature of things, actually exercised an oversight role of the church and we discover that the governmental structure was rather Erastian whether the church knew it or not.

(c) defections within the theological structure...not only caused by outside influences but also developed by rethinking Congregationalists within. (This is one of the acceptable weaknesses in the ideology.)