

Church Membership Vow #5

Do you submit yourselves to the government and discipline of the Church,
and promise to study its purity and peace?

XXX. Of Church Censures

30:1 The Lord Jesus, as King and Head of His Church, hath therein appointed government, in the hand of Church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate. (1)

(1)Isa. 9:6,7; 1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Thess. 5:12; Acts 20:17,18; Heb. 13:7,17,24; 1 Cor. 12:28; Matt. 28:18-20

Hebrews 13:17 ¹⁷ Obey your leaders and submit *to them*, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

30:2 To these officers the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed, by virtue whereof, they have power, respectively, to retain, and remit sins; to shut that kingdom against the impenitent, both by the Word, and censures; and to open it unto penitent sinners, by the ministry of the Gospel; and by absolution from censures, as occasion shall require. (1)

(1)Matt. 16:19; Matt. 18:17,18; John 20:21-23; 2 Cor. 2:6,7,8

Matthew 16:13-19 ¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴ And they said, "Some *say* John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." ¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. ¹⁹ "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."

Matthew 18:15-20 ¹⁵ "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. ¹⁶ "But if he does not listen *to you*, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED. ¹⁷ "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸ "Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. ¹⁹ "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. ²⁰ "For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst."

30:3 Church censures are necessary, for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren, for deterring of others from the like offences, for purging out of that leaven which might infect the whole lump, for vindicating the honour of Christ, and the holy profession of the Gospel, and for preventing the wrath of God, which might justly fall upon the Church, if they should suffer His covenant, and the seals thereof, to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders.(1)

(1)1 Cor. 5 throughout; 1 Tim. 5:20; Matt. 7:6; 1 Tim. 1:20; 1 Cor. 11:27 to the end; with Jude 23

1 Timothy 5:20 ²⁰ Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of *sinning*.

The Three Purposes of Church Discipline (BCO 27-3)

The exercise of discipline is highly important and necessary. In its proper usage discipline maintains:

- a. the glory of God,
- b. the purity of His Church,
- c. the keeping and reclaiming of disobedient sinners. Discipline is for the purpose of godliness (1 Timothy 4:7); therefore, it demands a self-examination under Scripture.

30:4 For the better attaining of these ends, the officers of the Church are to proceed by admonition; suspension from the sacrament of the Lord's Supper for a season; and by excommunication from the Church; according to the nature of the crime, and demerit of the person.(1)

(1)1 Thess. 5:12; 2 Thess 3:6,14,15; 1 Cor. 5:4,5,13; Matt. 18:17; Tit. 3:10

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 ¹² But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, ¹³ and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.

2 Thessalonians 3:14-15 ¹⁴ If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. ¹⁵ *Yet* do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

1 Corinthians 5:4-5 ⁴ In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, ⁵ *I have decided* to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

2 Corinthians 2:5-11 ⁵ But if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not to me, but in some degree-- in order not to say too much-- to all of you. ⁶ Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which *was inflicted* by the majority, ⁷ so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort *him*, otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. ⁸ Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm *your* love for him. ⁹ For to this end also I wrote, so that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things. ¹⁰ But one whom you forgive anything, I *forgive* also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, *I did it* for your sakes in the presence of Christ, ¹¹ so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes.

XXXI. Of Synods and Councils

31:1 For the better government, and further edification of the Church, there ought to be such assemblies as are commonly called synods or councils:(1) and it belongeth to the overseers and other rulers of the particular churches, by virtue of their office, and the power which Christ hath given them for edification and not for destruction, to appoint such assemblies;(2) and to convene together in them, as often as they shall judge it expedient for the good of the Church.(3)

(1)Acts 15:2,4,6 (2)Acts 15 (3)Acts 15:22,23,25

- See Acts 15 (Jerusalem Council)

31:2 It belongeth 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: which decrees and determinations, if consonant to the Word of God, are to be received with, reverence and submission; not only for their agreement with the Word, but also for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God appointed thereunto in His Word.(1)

(1)Acts 15:15,19,24,27,28,29,30,31; Acts 16:4; Matt. 18:17-20

31:3 All synods or councils, since the Apostles' times, whether general or particular, may err; and many have erred. Therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith, or practice; but to be used as a help in both.(1)

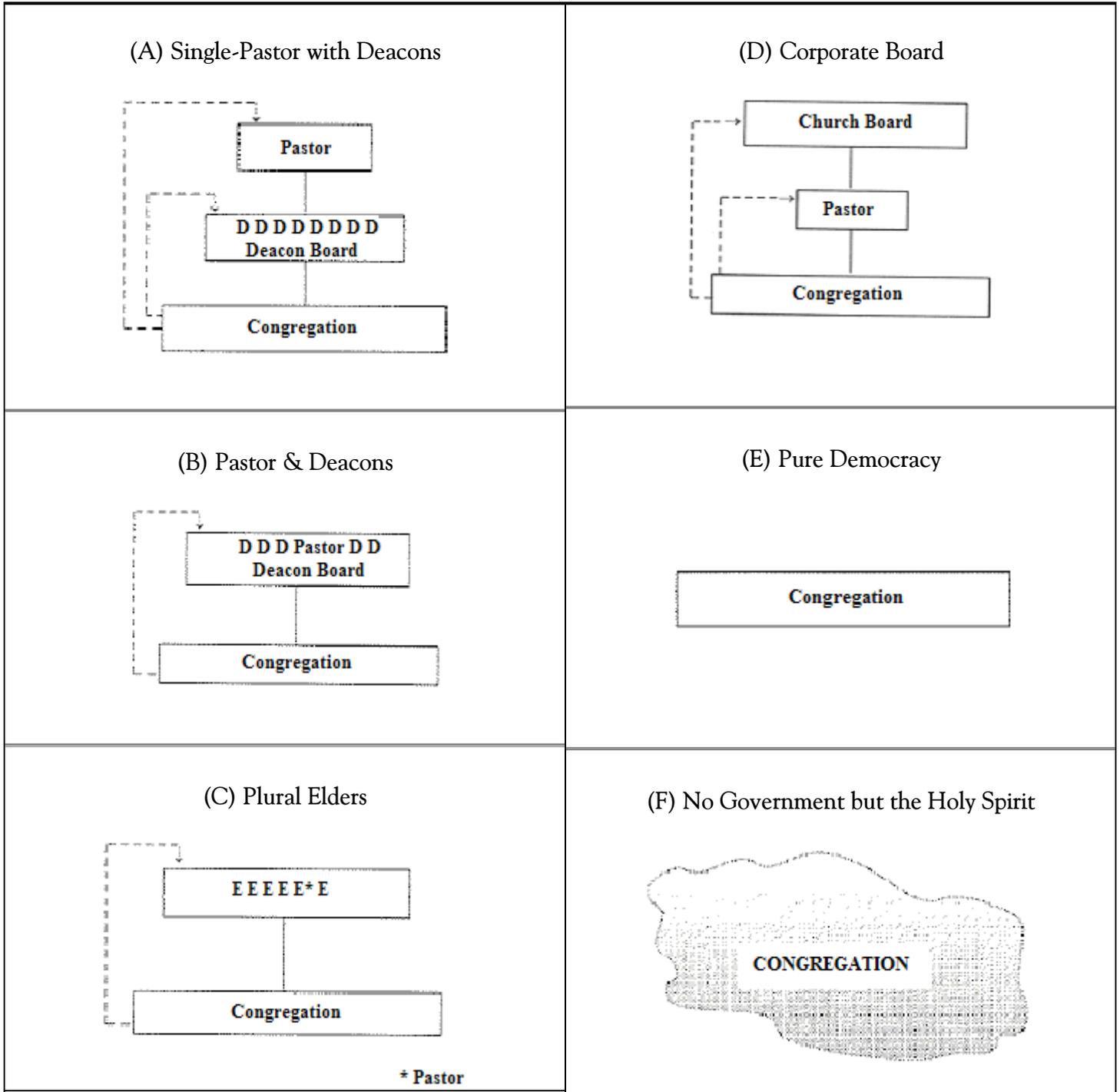
(1)Eph. 2:20; Acts 17:11; 1 Cor. 2:5; 2 Cor. 1:24

31:4 Synods and councils are to handle, or conclude nothing but that which is ecclesiastical: and are not to intermeddle with civil affairs which concern the common wealth, unless by way of humble petition in cases extraordinary; or, by way of advice, for satisfaction of conscience, if they be thereunto required by the civil magistrate.(1)

(1)Luke 12:13,14; John 18:36

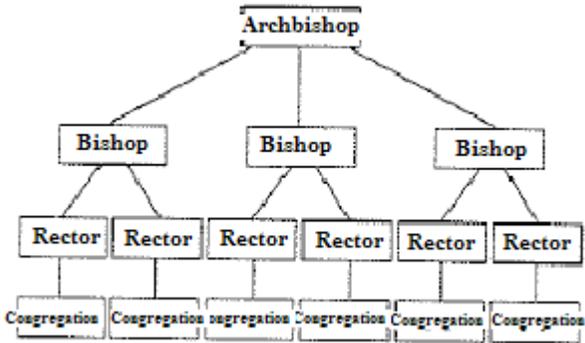
John 18:36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."

(1) Congregational (six types)



¹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 923-936.

(2) Episcopal



(3) Presbyterian

