
The Westminster Confession of Faith

Week 13

30:1- Church Government

Church government is distinct from the civil government.

The government of the church is through officers
(Acts 15; 1 Timothy 5:17; Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1, 2):

Episcopal
Congregational
Presbyterian

30:2 and 4 – Church Censures

What are the keys? (Matthew 16:19; 18:17-18; John 20:21-23)

Process of Presbyterian church discipline.

30:3 – Purposes of Censures

reclaiming the brethren;
detering others from like offenses;
purging the body;
vindicating the honor of Christ and the profession of the gospel;
preventing the wrath of God.

31:1 – Church Councils

The general principle of Government applies to the whole church (Acts 15).

The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Christian Church:

Nicaea, 325, was called by Emperor Constantine and settled the Arian controversy
(Father alone is God).

Constantinople, 381, opposed Appolonarianism
(Jesus had divine spirit but human body and soul).

Ephesus, 431, condemned Nestorianism (Jesus is two persons) and
Pelagianism (man has ability to save himself).

Chalcedon, 451, Marcion, Eutichianism (tertium quid), and Nicene Creed.

Constantinople II, 553, Monophysitism (Jesus had one nature, not two).

Constantinople III, 680, Monothelitism.

Nicaea II, 787, sanctioned the use of icons.

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31:2 – Purpose of Councils

The purpose of synods and councils:

To determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience;
To set rules for the worship and government of the church;
To receive and settle complaints.

All judgements of theirs are to be received when they agree with the word of God.

31:3 – Reliability of Councils

All synods or councils have erred.

Scripture is the only reliable rule of faith and practice.

31:4 – Jurisdiction of Councils

“Separation of church and state?”

Separate spheres.

Extraordinary petitions and requests for advice.

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