
CHAPTER 31: OF SYNODS AND COUNCILS

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 vii}*

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.

2. Acts 15.

3. Acts 15:22,23,25.

Notes:

- Summary: Basis for Synods and Councils
 - o Principle of the overseer
 - o Purpose of edification

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 mal-administration, 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.^{4 viii}*

4. Acts 15:15, 19, 24, 27-31; Acts. 16:4; Matt. 18:17-20.

Notes:

- Summary: Function of Synods and Councils
 - o Determine controversies
 - o Set rules and directions
 - o Receive and determine complaints

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 an help in both.⁵*

5. Eph. 2:20; Acts 17:11; I Cor. 2:5; II Cor. 1:24.

Notes:

- Summary: Fallibility of Synods and Councils
 - Synods and Councils do make mistakes.
 - Their instruction is not the rule of faith and practice, but it is a help.
-

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.*⁶

6. Luke 12:13-14; John 18:36.

Notes:

- Summary: Domain of Synods and Councils
 - Purely ecclesiastical
 - Not civil
-