

David Dickson's
Truth's Victory Over Error
Chapter XXXI.
Of Synods and Councils.

QUESTION I.

Ought there to be such Assemblies for the Government and further edification of the Church, as are called Synods and Councils?

Yes. *Acts 15.2, 4, 6.*

Are the decrees and determinations of Councils, and Synods, if consonant to the Word of GOD, to be received with reverence, and submission, not only for their agreement with the Word, but also for their power, whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of GOD appointed thereunto in his Word?

Yes. *Acts 15.15, 19, 24, 27-31. Acts 16.4. Matth. 18.17-20.*

Well then, Do not the Brownists and Independents err, who maintain, that every particular Congregation, or church, hath in itself the full power of church Government for exercising the whole power of the keys, without subordination, or subjection to any Classical or Synodical Meeting: and that Presbyteries, and Synods, have only a power of counselling, advising, and exhorting, but no power of Jurisdiction, to command or enjoin any thing in the Lord, to particular churches or congregations?

Yes.

By what reasons are they confuted?

(1) Because, the *Apostolick church* referred all weightier matters, which did equally concern many Congregations, to the free suffrages and votes of the Apostles, Pastors, and select Brethren, and not to the determination of any *one particular church, or congregation*; *Acts 15.23-25. Acts 6.2,3.*

(2) Because, it is evident from Scripture, that there have been many *particular churches, and congregations subordinate to one Presbytery*. For, in the *church of Jerusalem*, it is

manifest, that there were more than *one congregation*. First, from the multitude of Believers, who were of a greater number than could be of one Congregation, *for hearing the Word, and communicating*; Acts 2.41,42. Acts 5.14. Acts 6.1-7. Acts 21.20. Secondly, From the multitude of *Pastors and Ministers*, whose pains and labours many *churches* required; Acts 1.12-14, 26. Acts 2.1, 14, 37, 42. Acts 4.31, 34, 35, 37. Acts 6.2. Acts 8.14. Thirdly, From the diversity of *Tongues among the Disciples at Jerusalem*, which were given, not only for the edification of those that were of that Church, but also *for signs and wonders to others*, who were without, and not of that Church. Fourthly, It is manifest from this, *that in those days*, they had no churches, or meeting houses built, *but only met and convened in private houses, and upper rooms*.

(3) The same is also true of the church of *Antioch, Ephesus, and Corinth*, from the *Acts of the Apostles*; and other places of Scripture. But all these congregations were ruled and governed by one *College of Pastors*.

(1stly) Because, all these particular Congregations are called but one church; Acts 18.22. Acts 12.5. (2ndly) Because, in that one church, there were church *Presbyters*, who were called *Governors*, not of any one particular congregation, but of the church, which was made up of many *particular churches*; Acts 20.17. Acts 15.2,3. Acts 13.1-3. (3rdly) Because, these *Presbyters* did meet together for governing the *church*, and performed *Acts of Jurisdiction*, which concerned the whole *church in common*; Acts 11.30, compared with chapter 4.35, 37: And Acts 21.18, 20-25, and Acts 13.1-3. (4thly) Because, there is a *particular example of a Synod*, which had the *power of Jurisdiction*, and which consisted, and was made up of *members*, out of diverse *Classical Conventions*: For when the Question about *circumcision*, and the keeping of *Moses' Law*, which troubled the *Churches of Syria, Cilicia, Antioch, and Jerusalem*, could not be *determined* in their own *particular churches*, the *matter was referred to a Synod of Apostles and Presbyters*, who met at *Jerusalem*, which *decided the controversy, and appointed their decrees to be obligatory, and binding to all these foresaid churches*; Acts 15. Acts 16.4. Acts 21.25.

(4) Because, the *Jewish church*, which was a *politick body*, had in every *city Synagogues* subordinate to one *supreme council*, or great *Synagogue* which was at *Jerusalem*; Deut 17.8,12. 2 Chron. 19.8, 11. Exod. 18.22, 26. Seeing therefore, dangers and difficulties, for the preventing and healing of which, the Lord hath appointed and set up, in that *church* such a *government*, may be as great, if not greater in his *church*, under the *New Testament* than was then; and seeing the Lord has no less consulted the good of his church now, than he did of old; it follows, that there must be *councils*, no less under the *New Testament* than under the *old*, to which particular *churches* ought to be *subordinate*.