

**DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH (ECCLESIOLOGY) – Part 2**

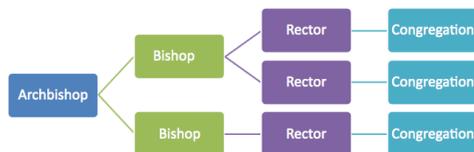
**Ecclesiology** comes from the Greek word, *ekklesia* (ἐκκλησία), which means a gathering of people called out from their homes to a public assembly - an assembly of Christians gathered for worship, or the whole body of Christians (the church) scattered through the whole earth.

The Bible describes how the church is to be governed. Today, the forms of church government falls into one of three forms: 1. Episcopal; 2. Congregational; or 3. Presbyterian. Of the three, the *Presbyterian form* seems to conform most with biblical church government.

**1. EPISCOPAL**

The authority comes from the top down in a hierarchy of bishops with one pope, bishop, or archbishop as the head of the church, who supervises the other bishops (geographical division) and rectors of churches. Congregations have a limited say. Eg. the Roman Catholic Church, Greek Orthodox Church, Anglican/Episcopalian churches, Lutheran and Methodist churches.

Organization of Episcopalians



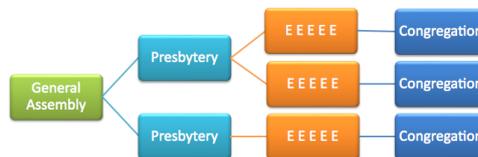
Congregational (Single Elder – Pastor)



**2. CONGREGATIONAL**

The congregation has the final word in all decisions. Each congregation is entirely independent. Sometimes there is only one elder - the minister, and a group of deacons make decisions subject to the congregation’s approval. Eg. Baptist, Congregational churches.

Presbyterian Government



**3. PRESBYTERIAN**

- a. Christ alone is the Head over all things in His church (Eph 1:20-23; 5:23; Col 1:18). Christ rules in the church through **elders elected by the people**, assisted by **deacons** who care for the material needs of the flock. It is a representative government. Churches join other Presbyterian churches in geographical groups called **presbyteries**. The church is governed by an assembly of elders; there is privilege of appeal from a local assembly to a geographical Synod/Presbytery. All churches and presbyteries are further joined together in a **General Assembly**. Presbyterianism avoids a superior class (episcopal) and grants the people an effective vote. Acts 15/16:4 appears to describe a Presbytery or General Assembly as leaders from a group of churches decide on an issue of doctrine and practice.
- b. **Church Officers**: 1. **Apostles & prophets** laid the foundation of the church and have ceased (Mk 3:14, Gal 1:1, Eph 2:20, 4:11-12); 2. **Elders (presbyteros)**, **bishops (episcopoi)**, **shepherds & pastors** refer to the same office of the elders to be appointed in every church (1 Pet 5:1-2, Acts 11:30, 1 Tim 3:1, Tit 1:5). Elders/pastors who labour in word & doctrine are similar to ruling elders (1 Tim 5:17); Plurality of elders in NT church (Acts 14:23, 20:17,

Phil 1:1). Ordination was an act of elders (Acts 13:1-3; 1 Tim 4:14). 3. **Deacons** (Acts 6:1-6, 1 Tim 3:8-12) care for material needs of the church. Office bearers are chosen by the people. (Acts 1:23, 14:23, 6:1-6).

#### 4. **PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH** (Acts 2:42-47).

- a. **Salvation.** To preach the Gospel (Mt 28:18-20).
- b. **Sanctification.** To grow in Christlikeness and holiness (Eph 4:13-16).
- c. **Service.** To worship the one living and true God and edify fellow believers in the faith (Ps 29:1-2; Eph 4:12; 2 Cor 9:8).
- d. **Vision of Life B-P Church:** To build a united church family that is committed to making disciples through Salvation, Sanctification and Service, to the glory of God.

#### 5. **CHURCH WORSHIP** [James Beeke, *Bible Doctrine vol.3, p265, 267*]

##### a. **Principles of Worship**

- 1) God-focused (Mt 4:10 Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.)
- 2) Christ-centered (Jn 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.)
- 3) Spirit-moved, (Jn 16:13 the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth©)
- 4) Word-based (Mt 15:9)
- 5) Heart-felt (Mt 15:8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me.)
- 6) Church-shared (Heb 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together,)
- 7) Lord's Day-observed (Acts 20:7 And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them)

##### b. **Nature of our Worship.**

- 1) Doxology (praise and adoration of God). Ps 29:1-2
- 2) Orderly (thoughtful, organized). 1 Cor 14:26, 40 – let worship be dignified and orderly.
- 3) Edification (preach, teach to build others). Rom 10:14, 17.
- 4) Confession (congregational response in word, prayer, song). Ex 24:7.
- 5) Led by office bearers. 1 Cor 11:33-34.

**c. Order of our Worship:** 1. Call to Worship; 2. Hymn of Worship; 3. Opening Prayer; 4. Public reading of Scriptures; 5. Offerings; 6. Doxology; 7. Congregational singing; 8. Preaching of God's Word; 9. Benediction. 10. Sacraments.

#### 6. **SACRAMENTS: Baptism & the Lord's Supper**

- a. **What are sacraments?** Sacraments are signs and seals (Gen 17:11, Rom 4:11) that represent the faith, regeneration, forgiveness of sin, and union with Christ that have already happened in the heart. God bestows spiritual blessings bestowed upon believers when they observe the sacraments by faith. The sacraments help believers understand the Gospel in picture form.
- b. **WSC Q. 92. What is a sacrament?** Answer: A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ; wherein, by sensible signs, Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers.-[1 Pet 2:1, 1 Cor 12:13]
- c. **Q.93. Which are the sacraments of the New Testament?** Answer: The sacraments of the New Testament are baptism, and the Lord's Supper. [Mt 28:19. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. 1 Cor 11:23. For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread ...]
- d. **Q. 91. How do sacraments become effectual means of salvation?** Answer. The sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in him that doth administer them; but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit in them that by faith receive them. [1 Peter 3:21. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.]

## 7. **BAPTISM**

- a. **Q. 94. What is baptism?** **Answer:** Baptism is a sacrament, wherein the washing with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, doth signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's. [Mt 28:19, 1 Cor 11:23, Gal 3:27, Rom 6:3-4]
- b. **Q. 95. To whom is baptism to be administered?** **Answer:** Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him; but the infants of such as are members of the visible church, are to be baptized. [Acts 2:41, Gen 17:7, 10, Gal 3:17-18, 29, Acts 2:38-39]
- c. **General principles of Baptism:**
- 1) Instituted by Christ (Mt 28:19)
  - 2) Done in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19-20)
  - 3) Water is used in baptism (Mt 3:11, 16, Acts 8:36-37)
  - 4) Baptism is a public declaration of one's faith in Christ and identification with Him (Rom 6:3-5)
  - 5) Baptism symbolizes cleansing and purification (Acts 2:38, 22:16, Heb 10:22).
- d. **Mode of Baptism: Immerse or Sprinkle?**
- i. **Immersion** (practiced by Baptists & some Reformed churches) - the word *baptizo* means to immerse, dip, plunge (Mt 1:10, Rom 6:4).
  - ii. **Sprinkling** (practiced by Presbyterians) – Charles Hodge said that the word *baptize* does not only mean “immerse”, but is used with a range of meanings that may include cleansing, purification by sprinkling. In the OT for example, the priests were ceremonially cleansed by sprinkling (Num 8:6-7, 19:13, 18-20).
  - iii. The mode of baptism does not matter. What is more important is that one is washed in the heart by the blood of Christ. “More faith less water, less faith, more water” – John Sung.
- e. **Infant Baptism**
- i. The gracious covenant God established with man is the basis for the practice of infant baptism. In Gen 17:9-13, God made a covenant with Abraham's family. The male infants born in Abraham's family were circumcised as a sign of the covenant. Not only did Abraham belong to the covenant, his children were also under it, and were recipients of His covenant promises.
  - ii. Infant baptism reminds Christian parents of their responsibility to faithfully bring up their child in the fear and knowledge of God. When they offer their infants up for baptism, they are claiming God's covenant promises that He cares for the whole family and will protect, guide, and help the child to understand spiritual truths leading to salvation (Deut 6:7-10);
  - iii. The Old and New Covenants are the same: same mediator and same means of salvation – by grace through faith in the Messiah (Acts 2:38-39, 1 Cor 7:14). The only difference between the two covenants lie in the administration of the sign and seal.

	<b>Old Covenant</b>	<b>New Covenant</b>
Sign, Seal	Circumcision	Believer's Baptism, Infant Baptism Col 2:11-12, Rom 4:11, 1 Cor 5:7
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adults (proselytes – Gentiles who embrace Jewish religion)</li> <li>• Infants born to Jewish families</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adults who are converted to Christian faith</li> <li>• Infants (babies born to Christian parent/s)</li> </ul>

8.

## 9. THE LORD'S SUPPER

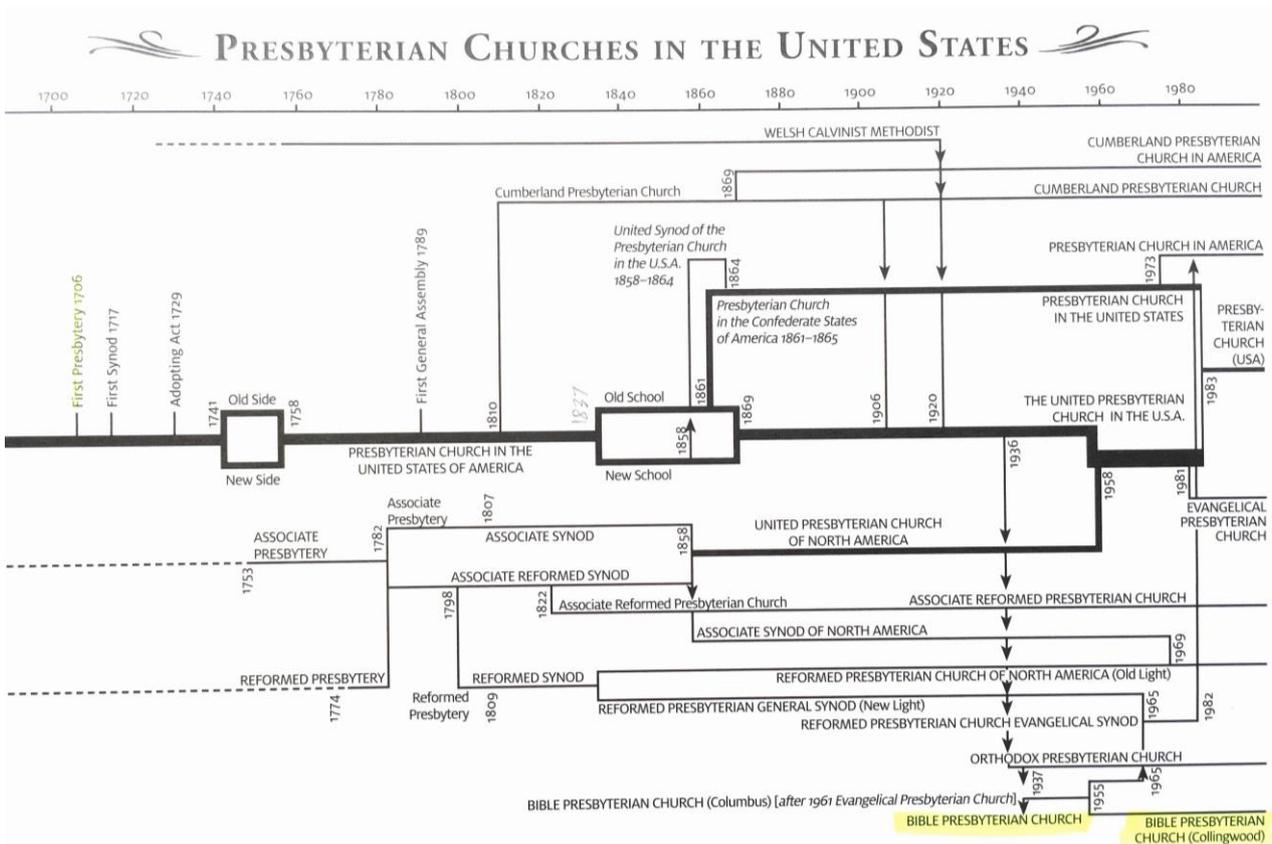
- a. The Lord's Supper pictures the sacrifice of the Lamb of God as atonement for sin. In the OT, the Passover looked forward to the death of Christ (Ex 12:1-4, Jn 1:29, 1 Cor 5:7). In the NT, the Lord's Supper looks back to the death of Christ (Lk 22:14-20, 1 Cor 11:23-26).
- b. **Q.96. What is the Lord's Supper?** Answer: The Lord's Supper is a sacrament, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Christ's appointment, his death is shewed forth; and the worthy receivers are, not after a corporal and carnal manner, but by faith, made partakers of his body and blood, with all his benefits, to their spiritual nourishment, and growth in grace. [Mt 26:26-27, 1 Cor 11:26, 2 Cor 10:16, Eph 3:17]
- c. **Q. 97. What is required to the worthy receiving of the Lord's Supper?** Answer: It is required of them that would worthily partake of the Lord's Supper, that they examine themselves of their knowledge to discern the Lord's body, of their faith to feed upon him, of their repentance, love, and new obedience; lest, coming unworthily, they eat and drink judgment to themselves. [1 Cor 11:27-29, 1 Jn 4:19, Rom 6:4].
- d. **Wrong Views of the Lord's Supper**
  - i. Transubstantiation [held by Roman Catholics]. The elements magically and miraculously changed into the actual flesh and blood of Christ.
  - ii. Consubstantiation [held by Lutherans]. Christ is physically in, with, and under the bread and cup.
  - iii. Memorial / Representation [held by Zwingli]. The supper is a memorial only and Christ's body is not present in actual substance. Elements merely represent the body and blood of Christ, just as Jesus figuratively says, I am the door / true vine, etc. The Lord's Supper has no spiritual benefit on the believer.
- e. **Reformed – Spiritual View** [held by John Calvin, Presbyterians & Reformed churches]. The Lord's Supper is a spiritual exercise. Christ is really and spiritually present in the bread and cup that represent the body and blood of Christ, respectively. In the Lord's Supper, His divine nature leads us to the ascended Christ, and we have a taste of heaven. Hence there is spiritual blessing when we partake it by faith (1 Cor 11:27-32).

## 10. BIBLICAL SEPARATION

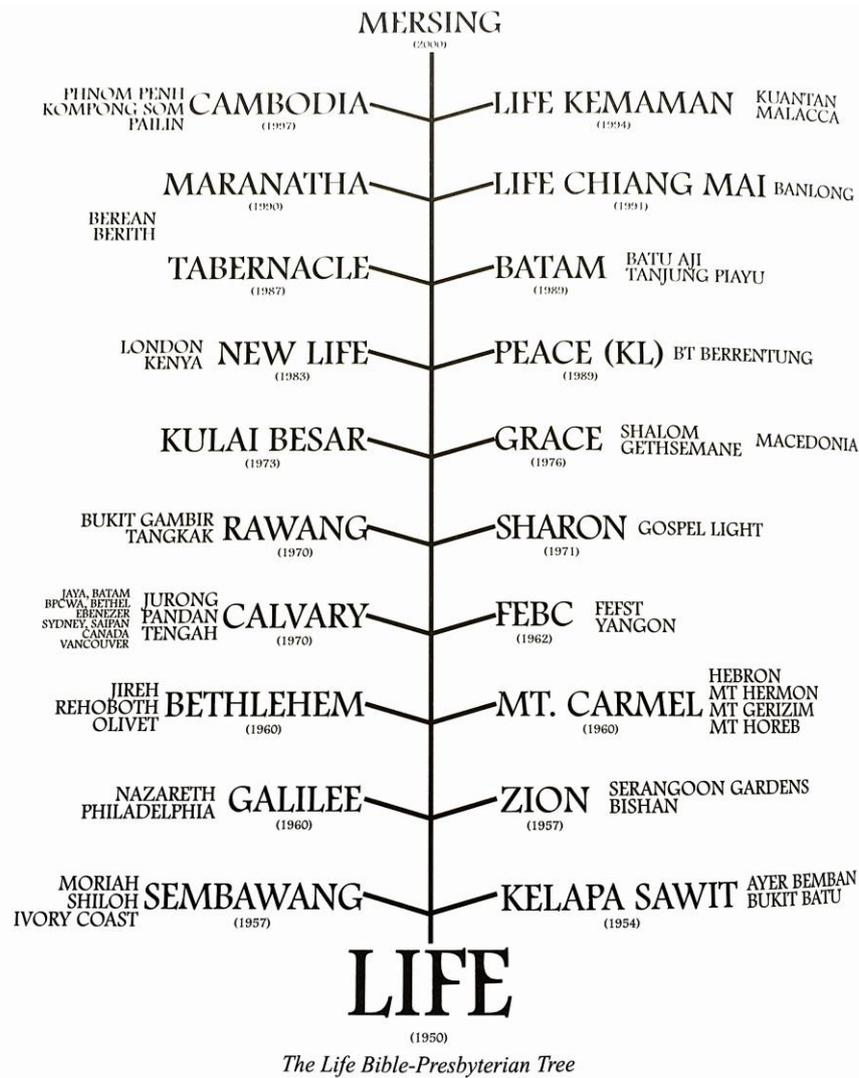
- a. **Personal separation from sin & worldliness.**
  - i. As God's children, we are to reflect the holy character of God. 1 Pet 1:15-16 "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." Be cleansed from all filth (1 Cor 7:1). Walk as children of light; have no fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness (Eph 5:11).
  - ii. Rom 12:1 "Be not conformed to this world". 1 Jn 2:15-16 "Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."
  - iii. Samson's failure to separate himself led to his downfall (Judg 15-16). Solomon's lust for foreign wives led him and the nation into idolatry (1 Kgs 11:1-8).
- b. **Ecclesiastical separation from doctrinal impurity & compromise.**
  - i. Israel was to separate herself from pagan nations (Deut 7:1-6, Ex 23:32-33, 34:11-17) so as to reflect the holiness of God (Lev 20:26 And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD *am* holy, and have severed you from *other* people, that ye should be mine.)
  - ii. Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Cor 6:14). "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." (1 Cor 6:17). If any teach untrue doctrine, do not receive the person into your house; neither wish him God speed (2 Jn 10). Unrepentant heretics are to be disciplined and rejected (Tit 3:10). Paul confronted Peter of his error (Gal 2:11-14).

c. **Splits in American Presbyterian Church (1700 – 1980s):** Old Side/New Side; Old School/New School; PC in Confed State of America/United PC in USA; PCA/PC(USA) / EPC; 1936 - OPC/Bible Presbyterian Church.

- 1) John Gresham Machen (1881-1937) was the Professor of New Testament at Princeton Seminary between 1906 and 1929. He countered modernist theology at Princeton by his 1923 book in defense of the Christian faith, *Christianity & Liberalism*. In 1929, he left Princeton and founded Westminster Theological Seminary (WTS) as an orthodox alternative. He founded the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) in 1933.
- 2) Carl McIntyre (1906-2002). In 1933 he founded the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions. McIntyre first joined Machen in 1936 to establish the Presbyterian Church of America, later renamed the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). A debate soon emerged over eschatology and use of alcohol and tobacco. In 1937, McIntyre and others left to form the Bible Presbyterian Church (Collingswood), to emphasize fundamentalism (premillennialist view and abstinence from alcohol and tobacco). In 1937 he founded Faith Theological Seminary as an independent college of the Bible Presbyterian denomination. In 1938, after the Collingswood church lost a civil suit over control of its church property, the congregation walked out en masse from their impressive building and followed McIntyre into a "Tabernacle of Blessing," and in 1957, into a neo-colonial church building that seated more than a thousand. In 1948, McIntyre organized the first International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC) for churches to come out from the World Council of Churches that has apostasised in its inclusivist fellowship with liberals, modernists, and Catholics. To McIntyre, separation emphasized the purity of the church. After he has served the congregation of the Bible Presbyterian Church for sixty five years, he was forced to resign in 1998 and promptly started Faith BP Church.



d. **Singapore Life B-P Tree [as at 2000].**



- Rev. Timothy Tow studied under Carl McIntyre at Faith Theological Seminary and imbibed the spirit of biblical separation advocated by the ICC. After his return to Singapore in 1950, Rev Timothy Tow started the Life Church English Service at Princep Street. In 1955, a decision was made to separate from the Presbytery over its ties with WCC and liberalism. Life Bible-Presbyterian Church was technically founded in 1955. B-P Churches grew rapidly with over 50 churches and missions. However, on 30 Oct 1988, the B-P Synod was dissolved over doctrinal differences on biblical separation.
- The words of our Lord Jesus to the compromised church at Thyatira: “hold fast till I come.” (Rev 2:25). In 2002, a heresy divided many branches of the Life B-P Tree. God is pruning the tree for growth and fruitfulness in future. The best is yet to be.
- May the Lord continue to use us in Life B-P Church to send out the light of Christ and the Gospel truth (Psalm 43:3).