

## A: Church Polity & Government

### SUMMARY

**1:** The Westminster Tradition does not subscribe to The Cambridge Platform; What the Cambridge Platform is. **2:** The polity of The Westminster Tradition is entirely incompatible with that of the Separatist Puritans. **3:** Corruption in church government leads to corruption in church worship. **4:** Against the cavil that The Westminster Tradition is not a church but a ministry and therefore is not itself bound to follow The Cambridge Platform. **5:** Extraordinary offices (such as that claimed by ETC) ceased; Power given by the Lord Jesus Christ to the local brotherhood to designate officers. **6:** As the extraordinary offices have ceased, the only offices now acknowledged in God's Word are those of elder (pastor, teaching elder, ruling elder) and deacon. **7:** No officer any longer called immediately by Christ, but called by the church wherein they are to minister; This done by election; The local church has power not only to appoint but also to depose. **8:** Church officers chosen by voluntary and free election; Ordained by imposition of hands and prayer; Officers to feed their own flock; The Westminster Tradition flouting all these principles; Reasons suggested for this. **9:** As the power to appoint officers is given to the local church, so it is their duty to support them; Consequences of not doing this. **10:** Requisites for church membership: repentance from sin and faith in Christ; Unscriptural criteria within The Westminster Tradition. **11:** A specific issue considered: the role of women in the church. **12:** A second issue considered: church discipline and its lawful administration.

1. The statement on The Westminster Tradition Bible reading calendar that '*Creedwise, we subscribe to ... The Cambridge Platform (1648 AD)*' is manifestly untrue and must either be the fruit of inexcusable ignorance or deliberate deceit. The 'Platform Of Church Discipline' was a system of church government, the document being 17 chapters in length, that was agreed upon by the elders and messengers of the churches assembled in the synod, at Cambridge, in New England (AD 1648). It was a statement of Congregational church polity, but was close enough to the Presbyterian position that in both England and New England (in North-East America) the two denominations could share a happy union and common identity [See Cotton Mather, *The Fifth Book, Magnalia Christi Americana*].
2. So vast is the difference between the historic polity of the Separatist Puritans and the present polity of The Westminster Tradition, that had the two been contemporaneous, it is likely the Separatist Puritans of New England would have denounced The Westminster Tradition as a dangerous sect, not to be admitted into fellowship. The following excerpt is cited to demonstrate that The Cambridge Platform was not a temporary or transitional statement, but was viewed as the New Testament pattern unto the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ and was not to be altered in the least measure, as The Westminster Tradition has done: [*Ch I, Sec 3: The parts of church-government are all of them exactly described in the word of God (1 Tim 3:15; 1 Chr 15:13; Exod 2:4; 1 Tim 6:13,16; Heb 12:27,28; 1 Cor 15:24), being parts or means of instituted worship according to the second commandment, and therefore to continue one and the same unto the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, as a kingdom that cannot be shaken, until he shall deliver it up unto God, even to the Father (Deut 12:32; Ezekiel 45:8; 1 Kin 12:31-33). So that it is not left in the power of men, officers, churches, or any state in the world, to add, or diminish, or alter any thing in the least measure therein.*]
3. It is as false to say that church government doesn't matter, as to say that the regulative principle of worship doesn't matter. The two are inseparable. When the former is corrupted, the latter will necessarily follow. The church is the house of the living God and is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim 3:15). Christ is the Head of that house (Heb 3:6), the King and Law-giver. He bears the government upon His shoulder (Is 9:6), the increase of which there shall be no end (Is 9:7). Can our worship through Christ be acceptable, when His government is thrown down? It is foolhardy and destructive to the faith to dismiss as inconsequential (or 'institutional'), the laws which Jesus Himself has instituted.
4. The worn, threadbare claims that The Westminster Tradition is a ministry and not a church are deliberately misleading. If these claims were true, then the missionaries would have quickly assisted the scattered churches to order themselves according to congregational and autonomous principles. This has not happened. An excuse commonly given is that many churches under the umbrella of The Westminster Tradition are still immature and in their infancy - therefore granting them autonomy is unwise. But the pockets of believers in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch were regarded by Paul and Barnabas as churches, even before any church officers had been ordained (Acts 14:21-23; Acts 15:36; Cam. Plat. Ch VI, Sec 1). It also is clear from the 'long time' (Acts 14:28; 15:36) that Paul and Barnabas

left these churches unvisited, that they expected these churches to *'be furnished with sufficient power for their own preservation and subsistence'* (Cam. Plat. Ch X, Sec 2). The Westminster Tradition professes to those without that it is merely a ministry and not a church - *'come to deposit the doctrines and move on.'* In actuality, it exercises all the powers and functions that rightfully belong to the local church. For it is under the auspices of this 'ministry' that 'true' preaching (rather than merely conveyance) takes place, members are baptised, discipline is meted out and the Lord's Supper is partaken. All these are functions of a church, not a ministry. Conferences are convened under the banner of The Westminster Tradition, never the local church. Communications are routed through The Westminster Tradition. Tithes are channeled to The Westminster Tradition (and the proper recipients, the local pastors who are worthy of their hire, are instructed to find secular employment). Do the local congregations appoint their own pastors, elders and deacons? No, again such powers are invested with The Westminster Tradition. These same pastors are not permitted to prepare their own messages, but are to convey those of The Westminster Tradition. They will rarely baptise, engage in more than rudimentary discipline or convene the Lord's Supper without the go-ahead of The Westminster Tradition. They are exalted and humiliated at the whim of The Westminster Tradition. The rule within The Westminster Tradition is arbitrary, shrouded and utterly inscrutable to those who are not of the inner circle. There are those who may compile anecdotal evidence to the contrary. But could they say, without blushing for shame, that these statements are not for the most part true? And could even our most erudite and subtle brethren really explain how this ministry works? If they could, then they should. A published constitution is long overdue.

Judge for yourselves. Below are just a few quotations from The Cambridge Platform. They prove that in the realm of church government, the practices of The Westminster Tradition bear no resemblance to those of the churches of the Separatist Puritans (*'including the Pilgrim Fathers, the actual founders of modern America and the true adherents of the Gospel of the grace of God'*). They are worthy of our study since they are explicitly subscribed to by The Westminster Tradition (see rear of BRC). The comments in square brackets [ ] are my own.

5. (Ch V, Sec 1,2 - **'...Of Church-Power; Or, To Whom Church-Power Doth First Belong'**) *...church-power is either supreme, or subordinate and ministerial. The supreme...is the Lord Jesus Christ. The ministerial is either extraordinary, as the apostles, prophets and evangelists; or ordinary, as every particular Congregational church. Ordinary church power [in our times] is either power of office - that is, such as is proper to the eldership [there being no higher office] - or power of privilege, such as belongs to the brotherhood. The latter is in the brethren formally and immediately from Christ - that is, so as it may be acted or exercised immediately by themselves [i.e. power automatically resides with the body of believers]; the former [power of office] is not in them formally or immediately, and therefore cannot be acted or exercised immediately by them, but is said to be in them, in that they [the brotherhood] design the persons unto office, who only are to act or exercise this power [i.e. no man can lay claim to office without the church first electing him.]*
6. (Ch VI, Sec 2,3,4 - **'Of The Officers Of The Church, And Especially Of Pastors And Teachers'**) *...The Lord Jesus Christ...appointed and ordained officers...These officers were either extraordinary or ordinary...The apostles, prophets, and evangelists, as they were called extraordinarily by Christ, so their office ended with themselves: whence it is that Paul, directing Timothy how to carry along church-administration, giveth no direction about the choice or course of apostles, prophets or evangelists, but only of elders and deacons; and when Paul was to take his last leave of the church of Ephesus, he committed the care of feeding the church to no other, but unto the elders of that church. The like charge does Peter commit to the elders (1 Tim 3:1,2,8-13; Tit 1:5; Acts 20:17,28; 1 Pet 5:1-3). Of elders (who are also in Scripture called bishops) some attend chiefly to the ministry of the word, as the pastor and*

teachers (1 Tim 2:3; Phil 1:1; Acts 20:17.28); others attend especially unto rule, who are, therefore, called ruling-elders (1 Tim 5:17).

7. (Ch VIII, Sec 1,2,5,6,7 - **'Of The Election Of Church Officers'**) *No man may take the honour of a church-officer unto himself but he that was called of God, as was Aaron (Heb 5:4). Calling unto office is either immediate, by Christ himself - such was the call of the apostles and prophets; this manner of calling ended with them, as hath been said - or mediate, by the church. [Rejecting this, Elijah Thomas Chacko claims to have been called by Christ Himself - directly and not mediately or indirectly through ordination. The cessationist teaching is that as extraordinary gifts have ceased, so extraordinary offices have likewise ceased. The Westminster Tradition effectively denies the latter. This is probably why few or none of our leaders have been biblically elected and ordained. The question would inevitably arise: "If our pastors, elders and deacons are elected, then why not our presiding pastor? For even Paul was separated for God's work by the Antioch church and ordained with fasting, prayer and the laying on of hands (Acts 13:1-3)!"] Officers are to be called by such churches whereunto they are to minister. Of such moment [importance] is the preservation of this power, that the churches exercised it in the presence of the apostles (Acts 14:23; 1:23; 6:3-5). A church being free, cannot become subject to any but by a free election (Gal 5:13; Heb 13:7). And if the church have power to chuse their officers and ministers (Rom 16:17), then, in case of manifest unworthiness and delinquency, they have power also to depose them: for to open and shut, to chuse and refuse, to constitute in office, and to remove from office, are acts belonging to the same power.*
8. (Ch IX, Sec 1,2,6 - **'Of Ordination And Imposition Of Hands'**) *Church officers are not only to be chosen by the [local or 'particular'] church (Acts 13:3; 14:23), but also to be ordained by imposition of hands and prayer, with which at the ordination of elders, fasting also is to be joined (1 Tim 5:22)...Ordination...is not to go before, but to follow election (Acts 6:5,6; 14:23). The essence and substance of the outward calling of an ordinary officer in the church does not constitute in his ordination, but in his voluntary and free election by the church, and his accepting of that election; whereupon is founded that relation between pastor and flock, between such a minister and such a people. Church officers are officers to one church, even that particular over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers. [In relation to his office, no man may say, "The world is my parish". Even Paul whose office of Apostle was extraordinary and temporary, did not assume authority over those churches he did not himself plant (Rom 15:18-21).] Insomuch as elders are commanded to feed not all flocks, but the flock which is committed to their faith and trust, and dependeth upon them (1 Pet 5:2; Acts 20:28). [It is noteworthy that the laying on of hands for ordination is mentioned at least six times in the New Testament and many more in the Old. In Heb 6:1-2, Paul declares it to be a foundational doctrine: 'Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ...not laying again the foundation...of laying on of hands...' Yet it is neglected in our midst. In my ten years within The Westminster Tradition I have not once witnessed the laying on of hands. When I was formerly appointed an elder, it was done behind closed doors; without first consulting the UK church (not least Hananiah Chew, the existing elder); by those from other churches who had no jurisdiction over the UK church; without fasting or the laying on of hands. The appointment was never publicly announced and has never been publicly rescinded. If ever I made reference to my office, I was reminded that "titles are not important". I was appointed as an elder in order to provide a counter-weight and keep Hananiah in check. During conferences, I was several times warned to be wary of Hananiah. Little did I know that he in private was being warned against me. Thus, a constant suspicion, one against the other, was fostered. We have been pawns in the hands of others (not the local church), played against each other when it was considered expedient. I experienced more confusion whilst engaged in missionary work in India and the Philippines. Many brethren called me 'pastor' or 'missionary pastor'. When I observed that Zephaniah and the other leaders never contradicted such appellations, but permitted and even affirmed these titles, I could only conclude that I must indeed be a missionary pastor. When I was in the Philippines, I persuaded myself that this calling was not just of man, but of the Holy Spirit. I wrote as such and my letter was published in The Jerusalem Times*

(Preface, 19th March 2015). I learned only later that this section of my report was not endorsed, but rather ridiculed by those who edited The Jerusalem Times. The situation was never properly clarified. As recently as the November 2017 Naigaon conference, Eliezer Pandey falteringly referred to me during his chairmanship as 'pastor Daniel'. What confusion. How contrary to God's Word and the creeds we are supposedly subscribed to, in which the qualifications, ordination and deposition of church officers are remarkably clear! How is it that in a 'ministry' in which minute attention is paid to every detail, church government is so hazy and vague? I believe it is deliberate. Within The Westminster Tradition, there is one undisputed office which is above any form of church discipline: that of 'the anointed servant of God'. Those who have unfalteringly paid homage to this office are affirmed and distinguished. Titles are added to this purpose e.g. from 'pastor' to 'missionary pastor' to 'veteran missionary pastor'. Those whose are suspected of infidelity to Elijah Thomas Chacko are denounced and their offices dismissed as being meaningless titles.]

9. (Ch XI, Sec 1 - '**Of The Maintenance Of Church-Officers**') *The apostle concludes that necessary and sufficient maintenance is due unto the ministers of the word...and requires that he which is taught in the word, should communicate to him in all good things, and mentions it, as an ordinance of the Lord, that they which preach the gospel, should live of the gospel, and forbiddeth the muzzling of the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn (1 Cor 9:14; 1 Tim 5:18).* [The WT 2017 year-end financial report showed a very different approach: 'It is worth noting that this year, our churches in Bankers and Banaue (both in Philippines) have come of age as they have started to contribute to GBMF.' In itself, a seemingly innocent comment: but the clear implication is that muzzling their local pastors Abiel Patacsil and Antioch Buminaang is necessary (the two pastors having been instructed to find employment and support themselves) so that the money might instead be passed to the Global Bible Mission Fund (GBMF). I would think that the churches in Bankers and Banaue will have truly come of age when they can properly support their own pastors. The consequences of the money going instead to GBMF are several. Firstly, the local pastors are dishonoured: for, *Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith...the labourer is worthy of his reward (1 Tim 5:17-18).* Secondly, the local pastors are hindered from feeding the flock of God, being as Levites that are forced to forsake the house of God and flee every one to his field (Neh 13:10-11). Thirdly, the local congregations cede all control over how their money is used. Those who administer the GBMF are not accountable to the local congregations: they were neither appointed by them, nor can they be deposed by them. All of these consequences tend to a weakening of the congregational structure.]
10. (Ch XII, Sec 2 - '**Of The Admission Of Members Into The Church**') *The things that are requisite to be found in all church-members, are repentance from sin, and faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38-42; 8:37): and therefore these are the things whereof men are to be examined at their admission into the church, and which then they must profess and hold forth in such sort as may satisfie "rational charity" that the things are indeed.* [Within The Westminster Tradition, baptism is taken as a surrogate for membership, it always being made clear that baptism includes identification with Elijah Chacko's person and his teachings. Of late, this emphasis has increased. In the Jan 2017 China Conference held in Cameron Highlands, I was a typist and was present at most of the baptismal interviews. Before concluding and seeking the verdict of those gathered concerning the interviewee's eligibility, Zephaniah Soh (who was leading the interviews) almost always sought to elicit the candidate's feelings about Elijah Chacko - concerning his preaching, person, covenantal headship, or their willingness to identify with his reproach. There having been many candidates, latterly when time was short, this was sometimes the only thing he enquired about. Faith in Jesus Christ was seldom enquired about. The Cambridge Platform recognises no such sycophancy. The baptismal interviews also clearly demonstrate that The Westminster Tradition is functioning as a church. Candidates are baptised, not into their local congregation, nor even into the visible church on earth, but exclusively into The Westminster Tradition. This point is worth underlining,

because if The Westminster Tradition is indeed a church, it must follow the government that Christ, the Head of the church has instituted.

Consider two laws in particular, which the church is bound to obey:

11. **The role of women in the church.** *'Let the woman learn in silence, with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety (1 Tim 2:11-15).'* Within The Westminster Tradition, this entire passage is trampled underfoot. Women are appointed to carry out the duties of missionaries and pastors. Not just the wise and elderly, but also the young, unmarried and headstrong. There have been many occasions when they have 'taught and usurped authority over the man'. The likes of Hannah Grace and Julia Low are renowned for their boldness. If I am not mistaken, many men have known the lash of their tongues. Even when there were capable preachers such as Habakkuk Singh and David Debbarma in Tripura recently, several of the young sisters preached to large gatherings in which were not only men, but even pastors and elders. Some will reply, "They were not preaching, but only conveying!" Were the people taught? Then they were teaching. Were the people admonished? Then they were preaching. Anyhow, if conveying is neither teaching nor preaching, then The Westminster Tradition must have only one teacher and one preacher. For there is only one who does not convey. Was the Holy Spirit with the sisters? I stand in doubt. For will the Holy Spirit honour that which is abominable to God and was insufferable to His servant Paul? The Cambridge Platform and Westminster Directory For Public Worship are virtually silent on the role of women within the church itself. The reason for this is obvious: it is so contrary to the light of nature and God's Word that it was simply not an issue they needed to address. The Cambridge Platform contents itself with this: *'The Lord hath appointed ancient widows (1 Tim 5:9,10) (where they may be had) to minister in the church, in giving attendance to the sick, and to give succour unto them and others in the like necessities'* (Ch VII, Sec 7). Even then it was debatable whether such ancient widows were really officers in the church. These were not qualifications to office, but to charity. Those 'widows indeed' who were already well reported of for good works, were to be provided for in their penury and desolation. The younger women, not so! They are positively instructed to *'marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully (1 Tim 5:14).'* The aged women are to *'teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed (Tit 2:4-5).'* What is more reproachful than for younger women (like Hannah Grace Thomas, Esther Ng, Esther Yeoh, Naomi Chua, Leah Chua and Rhoda Soh) to write refutations against the likes of Joel Chia and Jeshaiiah Lim who have been pillars in The Westminster Tradition, entrusted with the biggest missionary endeavour to date? It appears that a number of the refutations were expressly appointed to the younger women to draw up. Why were the official refutations not assigned to pastors and elders such as Elisha Yee, Eliezer Pandey, Micah Basnet, Habakkuk Singh, Abiel Patacsil, Antioch Buminaang, Jeshurun Tan, Kelvin Ng, Phinehas David Yeoh, Job Samyrajoo, Joash Lee, Jeremiah Ng etc? If it is answered that the sisters are simply more sharp doctrinally, then here is a new and strange thing. For never do we find in the Scriptures any such cohorts of women. If it is answered that the circumstances are peculiar (for the sisters have had the privilege to be trained up under Elijah Thomas Chacko), then why in this matter does he depart so far in practice from Paul, who will not have women to teach because they are more easily deceived (1 Tim 2:14)? There is a distinct difference between the rebuttals and refutations of Zephaniah Soh, Eliezer Pandey, Josiah John Chen, Caleb Chia, Philologus Eio and those of the sisters. The brothers write circumspectly and doctrinally. The sisters display invective and rage, as though feeding Joel and Jeshaiiah's flesh unto the fowls of the air is more important than bringing them to repentance. Such lack of restraint certainly gives occasion to the

adversary to speak reproachfully. Perhaps the separated churches in China should also take note? Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. In the UK church there are chiefly three brothers (Hananiah, Daniel, Des) and three sisters (Hadassah, Sarah, Lois). In the New Jerusalem Times 11th November, the three sisters were instructed to go ahead and take up leadership of the church. This was hailed by some as a model of Congregationalism! No, it's an assault upon the headship of Christ: *'For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church (Eph 5:23a).'* Acknowledge the commandments of the Lord all ye prophets and spiritual: *'Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church. What? Came the word of God out from you? Or came it unto you only? If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant (1 Cor 14:34-38).'* I propose that the true reason Elijah Thomas Chacko appoints so many prominent duties and roles in The Westminster Tradition to the women, is that they are easier to deceive and therefore easier to control.

12. **Of Excommunication And Other Censures.** The Westminster Divines (WCOF 1646 Ch XXX) and Separatist Puritans meeting in Cambridge (Cam Plat 1648 Ch XIV), recognised three forms of church censure: admonition (whether public or private), suspension from the Lord's Supper and excommunication. These church censures are within the hand of church-officers (plural), who have power respectively to retain and remit sins, to shut that kingdom against the impenitent, and to open it unto penitent sinners. Church discipline is to be proportionate, usually gradual and conducted in a spirit of meekness. It's aim is to bring the offender to repentance: *'And because we are not without hope of his recovery, we are not to account him as an enemy, but to admonish him as a brother (Cam Plat 1648 Ch XIV, Sec 6).'* The discipline practiced within The Westminster Tradition bears little resemblance to that in God's Word. One man has usurped the keys of the kingdom of heaven. All answer to him. He answers to none. Whereas Paul says *'Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father (1 Tim 5:1).'*, this man humiliates his elders in public. Whereas Paul says of bishops that they should be no striker (1 Tim 3:3; Tit 1:7), this man strikes often and is not afraid to do so in public. Did Nehemiah not contend and curse, smite and pluck (Neh 13:17,21,25,28)? Nehemiah was the governor (Neh 12:26) - *the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil (Rom 13:4b).* Ezra is a better example for church officers to follow, for he was of the priestly line, and his rule was spiritual rather than civil (Ezra 7:1-6). It is for magistrates to strike, and not church officers. Paul expected bishops to be patient (1 Tim 3:3), not soon angry (Tit 1:7) - yet one man is celebrated for being impatient and very soon angry. His arsenal with which he makes low every mountain and hill, extends far beyond those censures sanctioned in the Word of God. There are many types of 'law' that can be used to apply pressure to erring brethren: overwork, sleep deprivation and debt. Family members are deliberately set one against the other. The Jerusalem Times is weaponised and used to spread rumours, misinformation and propaganda. People are moved about from city to city and from country to country; told to get jobs and told to quit jobs. They are flattered and lifted up as good examples, only to be demolished later on. The accused are judged without a hearing (cp Matt 18:15-17). Even in the recent debacle, the refutations are 'against the allegations and cavils of the church of Judas Iscariot'. The church of Judah has been found guilty and reprobate before their case has properly been heard! The more sinister weapons are spiritual and employed at the place of preaching. Providence is authoritatively interpreted, often without the true facts ever being known. Sermons are peppered with specific and personal rebukes. These can be implicit or explicit and because of the setting, there is no room for a person to defend themselves. While a man's character is being destroyed beyond repair (for few will dare enquire into the real facts), the mantra is "save your soul, not your face." Certainly the law is good, but a man must use it lawfully (1 Tim 1:8). If all other measures fail, control is exercised over the soul. "To speak against the anointed servant of God is to blaspheme the Holy Ghost." But if this is so, then Elijah Thomas Chacko's word

must be greater than Jesus Christ's. For it is written that *whosoever speaketh...against the Son of Man it shall be forgiven him* (Matt 12:32). "To leave The Westminster Tradition is to go in the way of apostasy." Only if The Westminster Tradition is the only true church on earth. This was the claim of the Roman Catholic Church: that outside of her was no possibility of salvation. It seems to be as inconceivable to The Westminster Tradition as it was to the Roman Catholic Church that a person may feel that he cannot continue without partaking in sin (Cam Plat Ch XIII, Sec 4: '*Just reasons for a member's removal of himself from the church*'). Is it possible to deny that this could be the case, since '*The purest Churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error*' (WCOF 1646 Ch 25, Sec 5)? If that mixture and error is forced upon her members, then there may be no recourse but to implement Eph 5:11: '*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.*'