Context of Congregationalism

Under God, such responsibility to be the final judicatory authority resides not with a Pope or a Convention, not with a national Assembly or with a pastor, not with a regional association or a state convention, nor with some committee or board, whether paid or unpaid. Such responsibility for the discipline and doctrine of the congregation, under God, lies not with the deacons or the elders, but with the congregation as a whole.

Congregationalism may or may not be attractive, efficient, well understood, well practiced, easy, universally loved, impervious to distortion or corruption, but it is biblical. It is biblical in two senses: first, *only* the congregation—no outside person or body—is finally accountable to God for its actions in discipline and doctrine. Secondly, the *whole* congregation is so accountable. This is the picture that we get in the New Testament. I confess that the evidence is slight, the specifics are nearly non-existent, but the picture is consistent, and the implications important.

Jesus taught His followers in Matthew 18 that the final court for matters of disputes between br nt o to