

7. THE RULING ELDERSHIP

"Lord God, the **Steward** (*Ben Meshech* or *Oikogenous*) is this Eliezer'..., Abraham spoke to his **Elder** (his bearded *Z'gan* or his old *Presbuteroo*;) who **ruled** over all he had." Genesis 15:2 & 24:2.

There is no more important Officer in the Christian Church, than the Elder. Whatever else Preachers and even Patriarchs and Apostles may be, they too are also basically "Elders." First Timothy 5:17^f and Revelation 4:4-11 & 21:12-14.

One of the very words for "Elder" -- *Presbuteros* in the Greek¹ -- has given the name 'Presbyterian' to perhaps the oldest² denomination. Indeed, Presbyterianism is unthinkable without Elders. So too is the Biblical Church -- from Genesis to Revelation, and beyond.

Here we deal with the following. (1) The evidence for Pre-Mosaic Eldership. (2) The Eldership in the time of Moses. (3) The Eldership in the time of Joshua to the Judges. (4) The Eldership in the time of the Monarchy. (5) The Eldership at the time of the Exile and the Restoration. (6) The Eldership during the Earthly Life of Christ. (7) Christian Eldership Develops from that of the Old Testament. (8) Degeneration of Eldership down to the End of the Middle Ages. (9) Calvin on Eldership in Genesis and Exodus. (10) Calvin on Eldership in Leviticus to Deuteronomy. (11) Calvin on Eldership from Judges to Jeremiah. (12) Calvin on Eldership from the Exile to Christ. (13) Calvin on the Eldership from Christ to Acts. (14) Calvin on the Eldership in the Christian Epistles. (15) Calvin's Summary of the Eldership in his *Institutes*. (16) Calvin on Post-Biblical decline of Elders till the Reformation. (7) Calvin resurrects Eldership at the Protestant Reformation. (18) Calvin's student Knox and the Scottish and Dutch Churches on Eldership. (19) Eldership in the Calvinistic Westminster Standards.

THE EVIDENCE FOR PRE-MOSAIC ELDERSHIP

All three New Testament permanent Special Offices (of Elder and Preacher and Deacon) seem (back *via* the three Old Testament permanent Special Offices of King and Prophet and Priest) ultimately to root in the 'Presbytery' of the all-male Triune God Himself.³ The Office of kingly Elder seems to root especially⁴ in God the Father; the Office of prophetic Preacher seems to root especially in God the Son (or the 'Word' of God); and the Office of priestly Deacon seems to root especially in God the Holy Spirit.⁵

All words for **Elder** in the original Biblical languages, imply dignity and maturity. In the Hebrew, we find the Elder described by words such as "the bearded one" (*zaaqeen*)⁶ -- and even "the gray-headed one" (*saab*).⁷

Also as "controller" or "noble" (*choor* and *naadiyb* and *razan*); as "teacher" (*rab*); as "official" or "prince" or "ruler" (*šaar*); or as "prefects" and "rulers" (*s'eganiym*). Several Elders sat and ruled simultaneously as a *Gerousia* (or a "Session of older males"), and also as a *Sanhedrin* (or a "Council in session").

In the Greek, we are told the *Presbuteerion* or Presbytery consists of *Presbuteroi* or **Elders** and *Episkopoi* or Overseers.⁸ The Office of "Elder" (*Presbuteros*)¹ or "aged person" (*presbuteros*),² is grounded in God the Father as the white-haired Ancient of days⁹ and sovereign Ruler of the universe.¹⁰

Certainly, no female but only an old man could be called a "gray-headed bearded one!" And the earthly Elders were His representatives within the earlier Commonwealth of Israel and the later Christian Church.

This all-male Triune God and great King-Prophet-Priest, made the mature male man Adam as His Own image and viceroy or Governor-General.¹¹ Thus, man too is a king-prophet-priest. Before the fall, **Adam** (as the great "**Elder**" of the human race)¹² was to subdue the Earth and to rule it as God's representative and as a king-under-God.¹³

Between the fall and the Flood, the rôle of human "**Elder**" as described above, seems to have been filled (both among the godly¹⁴ and among the godless)¹⁵ by the head of each clan. Thus Abel, Seth, Enoch and Noah.

"By faith" -- these ruling *Presbuteroi* alias "the Elders obtained a good report."¹⁶ And each family head was required by God to rule his own dependents in a similar way to that in which Post-Calvary Elders were and are required to rule their families (as a precondition for holding New Testament Church Office).¹⁷

After the Great Flood and the dispersion of the human race into different nations,¹⁸ the Eldership continued. It unfolded further and became still more specialized. This took place even outside of the covenant people -- namely among the Uzzites and the Egyptians¹⁹ and the Midianites and the Moabites²⁰ and the Gibeonites.²¹

For this ancient religiously-grounded Office of the Eldership -- although undoubtedly degenerating among the Heathen -- nevertheless continued even there. In fact, it even expanded there -- from a purely family-centred into a tribal and ultimately into the national political Office of Tribal Chief and finally Paramount Chief or "Prince" and "King."²²

Within the covenant people, Abraham is called a "Prophet" -- and ministered the Word and Sacrament²³ to his huge household of some 318 mature men together with their families. In Abraham's time and thereafter, further specialization and functional differentiation of the Office of "Elder" even among God's covenant people seems to have taken place. **Abraham** was the "Preaching Elder" or the Prophet-Preacher-Teacher²³ of his large Congregation.

At the same time, however, his Steward **Eliezer** is specifically called an "**Elder**" or **Zaaqeen** and *Presbuteros*. He ruled over all Abraham had, as an **Overseer**. He pastored the flocks, and even helped secure a bride for Isaac.

As a model Elder, Eliezer visited and witnessed to a household of Strangers; worshipped God there; and blessed the Lord for leading him there.²⁴ Just as father Abraham's great-grandson **Joseph** later became the "**Overseer**" (or *Episkopos*) of Potiphar's household²⁵ -- and later of the Egyptian king's jail,²⁶ and then of all Egypt.²⁷

If all Elders today would only visit the folk in their wards in the same way -- and similarly take care of them! If all Elders today would only follow in the footsteps of Eliezer -- with his care of the homes of Abraham and Bethuel and Isaac! If only today's Elders would take care of the Church of Christ -- just as well as the Overseers Joseph took care of Potiphar's home, and later also of all the homes in Egypt!

Indeed, even more than four centuries after the time of Abraham,²⁸ his descendants still preserved the Eldership. In fact, it is recorded that **the Elders of Israel** gathered together as a "**Session of old men**" (*Ziqneey Yisraa'eel* or *Gerousia*) even while they were enslaved in Egypt.²⁹

THE ELDERSHIP IN THE TIME OF MOSES

While yet in servitude, the Elders still exercised religiously-grounded functions even of a socio-political nature -- just like the Elders of the heathen nations outside of the covenant at that time. Even at their very redemption from slavery, while Moses and Aaron ministered the Word and Sacrament -- it was precisely the Elders who distributed the elements of the Passover Lamb to its recipients and who thus promoted that act of divine worship.³⁰

It was **the Elders** who **encouraged Moses**, who assisted him to obey God, who meet and ate bread together, and who led the Lord's people.³¹ It was apparently from their midst, that "tithed Rulers" of tens and fifties and hundreds and thousands were then appointed.

Thus, each such special Elder, in addition to continuing to rule and shepherd his own family -- was made responsible also for ruling and shepherding some ten of the other (perhaps half a million) families of the people of Israel. That would then be the reason why the people as such were precisely then "tithed" by their rulers of ten, of fifty, of a hundred and of a thousand families both for administrative and religious reasons -- a "tithed Eldership" in a tithe-giving Church.³²

Soon after the Exodus from Egypt which liberated the people of Israel from their bondage, the functions of the Eldership were deepened. Apparently, either as the heads of families or otherwise as the eldest Stewards of each household -- the Elders of Israel all assembled to eat bread before God.³¹

Then -- apparently from out of all those Elders, and probably with popular approval if not by popular election -- **special Elders** were chosen to be "**ruling Judges**." This is significant.

We have just said these special Elders were chosen probably with popular approval -- because of the word 'take' in the parallel passage in Deuteronomy 1:13f. There, the Septuagintic Greek has *Dote* -- from the original Hebrew *Haabuu*. The latter is first person masculine plural imperfect, from *yaahab* -- meaning: to give; to allow; to set; to place; to appoint.

At the time of the Exodus, each Elder -- in addition to continuing to rule and to shepherd his own family -- was made responsible for ruling and shepherding ten of the other (at least six hundred thousand) families of the people of Israel. And, even in later Judaism, a Synagogue could and still can only be established where there were and are at least ten families.³³

Now these "Elders-of-tens" apparently corresponded to our New Testament local Elders who rule in the Session. But then also -- from among these Elders-of-tens -- "Elders-of-fifties" were appointed (probably corresponding to our New Testament Ruler Elders in the regional Classis or the Presbytery).³⁴

Again, apparently from among these Elders-of-fifties, "Elders-of-hundreds" were appointed (corresponding to our modern statewide Elders in the Provincial Synod). And last, apparently from these Elders-of-hundreds, other "Elders-of-thousands" were appointed (corresponding to our New Testament and modern national and/or international Elders in the General Assembly³⁵ where Moses himself as the Chairman of Israel's General Assembly and the Moderator and Mediator of the Old Testament presided as a type of Jesus Christ³⁶ (the final Moderator of every true General Assembly of His Genesis-through-Revelation Church).³⁷

After the establishment of this system of Christ-centred concentric "Sessions" or *Presbuteria* (where appeals could be lodged from the lesser to the greater and referrals made from the greater to the lesser),³⁸ Moses continued to communicate the Word of God to the Elders of Israel.³⁹ At Mount Sinai,⁴⁰ a special delegation (consisting of Moses the prophet and Aaron and his sons the priests and seventy of the Elders or "Nobles" of Israel) went nigh to God to worship Him.⁴¹

Possibly, as the (perhaps 700) "Elders-of-thousands" were selected or "tithed" as a tenth part from out of the (perhaps 7000) "Elders-of-hundreds" -- these "seventy" Elders too were selected or "tithed" as a tenth part from out of the perhaps 700 "Elders-of-thousands." That there were then approaching 700 such "Elders-of-thousands" -- seems altogether quite obvious from the fact that almost 700,000 households of Israel (and all its adherents) were then represented.

Then and thereafter, the Elders continued to adjudicate and to arbitrate and to reconcile grievances between brethren (in disputes among God's people).⁴² They also exercised their solidarity with and represented God's people before the Lord.⁴³ And they even helped bring the people's sacrifices and offerings to Jehovah.⁴⁴

In the book of Numbers, seventy of the Elders of Israel were specially commissioned and equipped with the power of the Holy Spirit to rebuke and to quiet the murmuring people of the Lord.⁴⁵ These seventy may well have been unusually godly, knowledgeable and communicative Elders especially set aside (just like Moses had been)⁴⁶ as "prophesying Elders"⁴⁷ alias Preachers.

At any rate, these seventy were certainly set aside from out of the broader mass of the Ruling Elders -- of those who really "ruled well."⁴⁸ For Moses knew these "seventy" to be true and godly Elders of the people, who could prophesy or declare God's Word to the people with power.⁴⁹ Indeed, perhaps this anticipates the New Testament Preaching Eldership as a necessary specialization of and outgrowth from the New Testament Ruling Eldership.

Note regarding the seventy Elders, that Numbers 11:16's word for them -- *Shooḅeyv* or "Officers" (also used in Exodus 5:6 to describe the "Officers" who were "Taskmasters") -- is used also in James 3:1*f* to describe the "Masters" or *Didaskaloi*. In Numbers 11:16, the 270 B.C. Greek Septuagint translation says the *Shooḅeyv* were from the Presbyteroon of Israel -- Presbuteroi and *Grammateis* over them.

In the book of Deuteronomy, the character of the Eldership as representative of the whole people, is emphasized.⁵⁰ For **the Elders** of one city are to extradite murderous refugees from their own flock, and to bring them back for appropriate punishment at the hands of the Judges.⁵¹

The popularly-appointed political **Judges** were originally selected probably even from the ranks of the Eldership itself. Thus the Elders too initially co-operated in the juridical execution of the various kinds of judgment (even when appealed from local to larger courts).⁵²

But later, with the growing specialization of the political function of the Judges, the Elders apparently began to centre their rule on and to make their pronouncements about more specifically ecclesiastical matters. Without however at any time withdrawing their influence from the extra-ecclesiastical areas of life.⁵³

In the Mosaic Pentateuch, then, several things are clear. It is certain the ecclesiastical Ruling Eldership of Israel "rooted" in the family⁵⁴ and "fruited" in religio-socio-political action to the glory of God⁵⁵ (with that politico-juridical action later being executed first by the Judges and ultimately also by Kings).⁵⁶

It is also clear that Moses the prophetic Preacher⁵⁷ often convened the Elders together as a Senate-in-Session.⁵⁸ It is clear too that the Elders usually if not invariably supported Moses' leadership.⁵⁹ And it is in addition further clear that the Elders were of the 'aristocratic best' or of the (non-hereditary) nobility⁶⁰ of the people.

For they were of the choicest heads of families⁶¹ -- whom they represented,⁶² and to whom they frequently spoke and/or reported.⁶³ Furthermore, they governed covenantally as a united Council -- rather than individualistically as independent persons.⁶⁴

While indeed teaching or giving general instruction to God's people,⁶⁵ the Ruling Elders did not (like the Prophets or the Teaching Elders) "preach" in the technical sense of the word.⁶⁶ And although often helping the Prophet or Preaching Elder in the distribution of the Sacrament which he initiated -- the Ruling Elders themselves never initiated the administration of the Sacraments.⁶⁷

Summarizing, then. The specifically-cultic or peculiarly-liturgical aspects of the ecclesiastical actions of the **Ruling Elders in Pre-Mosaic and Mosaic times** seems to have been centred as follows.

In praying and oathing. In entering into and (re)confirming covenants. In aiding the Prophet or the Preaching Elder by themselves distributing the Sacrament which the Prophet or the Preaching Elder initiated and administered. And in ruling over the members of the cultic community by witnessing and testifying and by warning and admonishing them.⁶⁸

THE ELDERSHIP FROM JOSHUA TO THE JUDGES

From the **pre-exilic** books of the Bible from Joshua to Jeremiah, it can be seen that the **Ruling Elders continued to rule** especially over the *Qaahaal* or the *Ekkleesia* -- the religious

gathering of Israel. At the beginning of that period of time, it seems the relationship between the Elders of Israel and the great leader Joshua was somewhat analogous to that between his predecessor Moses and the Elders of Israel during Mosaic times.⁶⁹

"The Lord also spake to Joshua, saying...: "When he (who slays accidentally) flees to one of those cities (of refuge), and shall stand...and...declare his cause in the ears of **the Elders** of that city -- **they** shall take him into the city...and give him a place so that he may dwell among them. And if the avenger of blood pursues after him, then they shall not deliver the slayer into his hand.... He shall dwell in that city until he stands before the Congregation for judgment.... Then the slayer shall return, and come to his own city."⁷⁰

From the Elders, the Judges were appointed. 'Joshua called for all Israel and for their **Elders** and for their heads.... And Joshua...called for **the Elders** of Israel.... And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of **the Elders** that outlived Joshua.⁷¹

Later, despite the development of the Judges' political influence -- those Elders who outlived Joshua continued to perform similar functions and responsibilities. Just as the Elders had done earlier during Mosaic times. Indeed, that was still the case also in the time of Ruth.⁷²

In the book of Judges, 'the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of **the Elders** that outlived Joshua.... The Lord raised up **Judges**, who delivered them out the the hand of those that despoiled them.... When the Lord raised them up **Judges**, then the Lord was with **the Judge**, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of **the Judge**.... When **the Judge** was dead, they returned....

The Elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah.... **The Elders** of Gilead said to Jephthah, 'We are turning again to you now'... Then Jephthah went with **the Elders** of Gilead, and the people made him head and captain over them.' And **the Elders** of the Congregation said, 'What shall we do for wives, for them that remain?'⁷³

The book of Ruth dates from 'the days when the Judges ruled.... Boaz 'took ten men of **the Elders** of the city..., saying "buy it [the land of Naomi's kinsmen]...before **the Elders**!.... And Boaz said to **the Elders** and to all the people, "You are witnesses this day".... And **the Elders** said, "We are witnesses!"⁷⁴

The transition to supreme power, from the political Judges to the later-established Monarchy⁷⁵ -- has been recorded in the historical books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles. Then too, the Elders continued to exert political influence -- although they now more and more concentrated on pastoral or ecclesiastical obligations.

In First Samuel, **the Elders**...said: 'Why has the Lord smitten us today before the Philistines?.... All **the Elders**...gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel..and said to him..."Make us a king to judge us!"... **The Elders** of Jabesh said to him (Nahash), "Give us seven days' respite".... He (Saul) said..."Honour me now..., before **the Elders** of my people!".... And Samuel...came to Bethlehem, and **the Elders** of the town trembled.... When David came to Ziklag, he sent...the spoils to **the Elders of Judah**..., saying, "Behold,. a present for you!"⁷⁶

THE ELDERSHIP IN THE TIME OF THE MONARCHY

Samuel established the Monarchy in Israel. Then 'all the Elders of Israel came to the King..., and David made a covenant with them.... David and the Elders of Israel...went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the house of Obed-Edom.... David and the Elders of Israel...were clothed in sackcloth.' The Psalmist urged God's people: 'Praise Him in the Assembly of the Elders!' And King Lemuel write to his son that a virtuous woman's 'husband is known in the city-gates, when he sits among the Elders of the land.'¹⁷⁷

In Second Samuel, 'Abner had communication with the Elders of Israel.... All the Elders of Israel came to the king..., and King David made a league with them... The Elders of his house arose, and went to him.... The saying pleased Absalom well, and all the Elders of Israel.... Thus did Ahithophel counsel Absalom and the Elders of Israel.... David sent...saying, "Speak to the Elders of Judah!".... And the Psalmist wrote: 'Let them exalt Him (the Lord) also in the Congregation..., and praise Him in the Assembly of the Elders!'¹⁷⁸

In First Kings, 'Solomon assembled the Elders of Israel.... And all the Elders of Israel came.'¹⁷⁹

... The King of Israel called all the Elders of the land and said, "Please mark and see how this man (Benhadad) seeks mischief!".... And all the Elders...said to him, "Don't listen or consent to him!"¹⁸⁰

'She (Queen Jezebel)...sent letters to the Elders and to the Nobles.... The Elders and the Nobles...did as Jezebel had sent to them.'¹⁸¹

In Second Kings, we are told 'Elisha sat..., and the Elders sat with him.... Jehu wrote a letter, and sent it...to the Rulers of Jezreel, to the Elders.... The Elders...sent to Jehu, saying: "We are your servants."¹⁸²

'King Hezekiah...sent...the Elders...to Isaiah.... King [Josiah] sent, and they gathered to him all the Elders of Judah.... The king sent and gathered together all the Elders of Judah.'¹⁸³ And in the days of Joel, God declared: 'Call a solemn Assembly; gather the Elders!... Gather the people, sanctify the Congregation, assemble the Elders!'¹⁸⁴

THE ELDERSHIP AT THE TIME OF THE EXILE AND THE RESTORATION

At the very commencement of the Babylonian Captivity, the Prophet Ezekiel sat in his house, 'and the Elders of Judah sat before me.... Certain of the Elders of Israel came to me.... Certain of the Elders of Israel came to inquire of the Lord, and sat before me.'¹⁸⁵

In the days of Jeremiah, 'rose up certain of the Elders of the land, and spake to all the Assembly.... Jeremiah the Prophet sent from Jerusalem to the residue of the Elders which were carried away captive.... My Elders gave up the ghost in the city.... The Elders of the daughters

of Zion sit upon the ground.... The anger of the Lord...did not favour **the Elders**.... The faces of **Elders** were not honoured.... **The Elders** have ceased from the city-gate.¹⁸⁶

During and toward the end and just after their exile in Babylon and Persia, Ezra wrote that 'the eye of their God was upon **the Elders** of the Jews.... We asked those **Elders** and said to them thus, "Who commanded you to build this House [of the Lord]?".... Let **the Governor** of the Jews and **the Elders** of the Jews build this House of God.... I make a decree what you shall do to **the Elders** of these Jews for the building of this House of God.... Let them not be hindered!.... And **the Elders** of the Jews built, and they prospered."¹⁸⁷

Seventy years later, 'whoever [of the exiles] would not come...according to the counsel of...**the Elders** -- all his substance should be forfeited and himself separated from the Congregation of those that had been carried away.... Then Ezra...stood up...and spoke to them.... Then all the Congregation answered..."Let now our **Rulers** of the whole Congregation stand up..., and let **all...the Elders** of every city and their Judges come at appointed times!"¹⁸⁸

So, from the pre-exilic historical books (Joshua through Ezekiel and Jeremiah), as well as from the exilic book of Ezra -- it can be seen that the Elders continued to rule especially over the *qaahaal* or *ekkleesia* or religious assembly of Israel.⁸⁹ They still ruled on, uninterruptedly.

At the beginning of the period, the relationship between the Elders of Israel and the great leader Joshua seems to be rather analogous. It resembled that between his predecessor Moses and the Elders of Israel during Mosaic days.⁹⁰

Later, in spite of the rise of the political influence of the Judges, the Elders who had outlived Joshua continued to exercise similar functions and responsibilities -- even as the Elders had done in Mosaic and pre-Mosaic times (and even as the Elders do in Post-Apostolic times).⁹¹ And it was the same even after the Judges, during the time of Ruth.⁹²

Even in spite of the still later transition of paramount power from the political Judges to the newly-established Monarchy as recorded in the books of Samuel and Kings and Chronicles,⁹³ the Elders continued to exert even political influence (yet while more and more concentrating on pastoral or ecclesiastical matters).⁹⁴ Thus pastoral or ecclesiastical duties of the Post-Mosaic and Pre-Exilic Elders included intercessory prayer;⁹⁵ assembling for worship;⁹⁶ receiving presents for the Lord;⁹⁷ (re)confirming the covenant from time to time;⁹⁸ giving pastoral comfort and counsel to the afflicted;⁹⁹ and, when in Session, being counselled by prophetic Preachers.¹⁰⁰

Elders were worthy of respect simply by virtue of the revered Office they held¹⁰¹ -- even when disobedient. Nevertheless, disobedient Elders needed to heed the warning of the prophetic Preachers¹⁰² and even of the godly Kings¹⁰³ who tried to bring them to repentance.

Indeed, self-centredness on the part of many of the Elders was one of the main reasons for the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem.¹⁰⁴ Yet even during the subsequent exile, it was still precisely the Elders who had to provide the government for the covenantal community.¹⁰⁵

After the return of God's people from their exile, nationally-recognized Elders (compared our modern General Assembly) continued to provide countrywide rulership as a non-hereditary

noble aristocracy. Regional leadership (compare our modern Presbyteries) was provided by the Elders of the various cities. And local leadership (compare our modern Sessions) was given by the individual Elders or Nobles¹⁰⁶ who were "heads of their fathers' houses."¹⁰⁷

Such were the "Bearded ones" (*Z^eqeeniyim*) or "Elders of every city"¹⁰⁸ and the "Grey-haired ones" (*Şaabiym*) or the "Elders of the Jews."¹⁰⁹ They were "the Officers or Controllers" (*Şaariym*) or the "Rulers of all the Congregation."¹¹⁰ They were "the Freemen" (*Chooriym*) or the "Nobles of Judah" and "the Prefects" (*S^egaaniym*) or the "Rulers"¹¹¹ of the people of God.

Just before the termination of the previously-mentioned exile, we find the development of the seventy-odd-member *Sanhedrin* or the "Council of Elders or seventy Lords."¹¹² Probably the *Sanhedrin* originated in remote Mosaic or even Pre-Mosaic times. But it seems to have received its Hellenistic name *Sun-hedrion* (alias "composed with a seat") -- especially, if not only then, with its new and its first-century-A.D. character.¹¹³

THE ELDERSHIP DURING THE EARTHLY LIFE OF CHRIST

When Jesus first came, the Jewish Elders sought to help Him. 'He entered into Capernaum. And a servant of a certain centurion...was ill and near death. And when he [the Roman centurion] had heard about Jesus, he sent to Him **Elders of the Jews** to entreat Him that He would come and heal his servant. And when they had come to Him, they entreated Him earnestly.... And Jesus went with them.'¹¹⁴

But soon after that, the situation in Israel greatly deteriorated. 'And when He [Jesus] was come into the temple..., **the Elders** of the [Judaistic] people came to Him as He was teaching and said: "By what authority do you do these things?"... Jesus said to them: "Truly, I tell you that the tax-collectors and the harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you!"¹¹⁵

'Jesus...said to His Disciples...: "The Son of man is betrayed to be crucified." Then **the...Elders** of the [Judaistic] people were **assembled**.... Caiaphas...entered into consultation, how **they would take Jesus...and kill Him**."¹¹⁶

'While He [Jesus] was still speaking -- look, Judas...came...from the...[Judaistic] **Elders** of the people!... Jesus said to those who had come to Him, the [Judaistic] Chief Priests and **Rulers** of the temple **and Elders**: "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs?"... The Chief priests and **Elders** and the whole Council [of the Judaists] sought false witness against Jesus, to put Him to death.... All the Chief Priests and Elders of the people took counsel against Jesus, to put Him to death."¹¹⁷

'Then Judas...brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the...[Judaistic] **Elders**.... When He [Jesus] was accused by the...[Judaistic] **Elders**, He answered nothing... The...[Judaistic] **Elders** persuaded the multitude to ask for Barabbas, and put Jesus to death.' Even when He was dying on the cross, 'the [Judaistic] Chief Priests mocked Jesus, with the Scribes and **Elders**."¹¹⁸

Indeed, even after Christ's resurrection and ascension, the Judaistic Elders were 'grieved that they [His Apostles] taught the people and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the

dead.... They laid hands on them, and put them in prison.... Their **Rulers** and **Elders**...commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus....

Further, they threatened them.... They [the Apostles] went to their own company, and reported all that the...[Judaistic] **Elders** had said to them.¹¹⁹

Now in Christ's time, the Elders or 'Lay Nobles' had a right to sit and to speak in both the 23-member Lesser *Sanhedrin* (or regional Presbytery), and in the Great(er) *Sanhedrin* (or the national General Assembly of Israel).¹²⁰ But with the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem, even the *Sanhedrin*-as-such was destroyed. And thereafter, only the Scribes or the Preaching *Rabbis* sat in the 72-member so-called "*Sanhedrin* of Jabneh."¹²¹

During the earthly life of Jesus, however -- the period when the New Testament Church Eldership was to take root -- the *Sanhedrin* or the "Council"¹²² was composed of the Priests and "the Scribes...with the Elders."¹²³ This seems to correspond to the modern "Joint Session" -- consisting of the (priestly) Deacons, the (prophetic) Preachers, and the (kingly) Elders.¹²⁴ And the essential co-equality and co-importance of these three Special Officers, can be seen from the constant change in the order in which these three kinds of Special Officers in the *Sanhedrin* or the Joint Session are mentioned from one Scriptural passage to another.¹²⁵

There can be no doubt that Christ's New Testament Church just before and especially after Calvary, steps right into the shoes of the Old Testament Church¹²⁶ of which it is the **continuation**¹²⁷ and the **replacement**¹²⁸ and the (now purely-ecclesiastical and now non-political) **advancement**.¹²⁹ Consequently, even the New Testament **Eldership** of the Christian Church continues and replaces and advances the Old Testament Eldership of the people of Israel.¹³⁰

CHRISTIAN ELDERSHIP DEVELOPS FROM THAT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Now the **New Testament Eldership** of the Christian Church first seems to have developed *via* Christ's Pre-Calvary commissioning of the twelve Apostles¹³¹ (as the New Testament's foundation-laying prophet-priest-kings who were themselves built on the basis of the Old Testament's Patriarchs).¹³² And also *via* the "other seventy" commissionees¹³³ whom Christ sent out two by two **to visit the covenant people in their homes** (as the first New Testament Church "Elders" who restored the sanhedrinally-ruined "Eldership-of-seventy" previously appointed by Moses) -- and **to pray for the sick** and thus to spread the good news of the Gospel.¹³⁴

Conceivably, the appointment of "the seven" in Acts six may just be referred to Christian Elders who became Christian Deacons.¹³⁵ When Christian Deacon Stephen did great wonders, certain of the Judaistic Synagogue 'were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spoke. And they stirred up the [Judaistic] people and the Elders...and came upon him and caught him.'¹³⁶

It is quite certain that Christian Elders had already been appointed over the Christian Church in Jerusalem, at least in Acts 11:29f by 41 A.D.¹³⁷ If not much earlier, and possibly even before the death of Christ.¹³⁸

Wherever the Apostles or their Preacher-Evangelists went, they appointed Sessions of Christian Elders to rule the newly-established Christian Congregations. What could probably have been only the Presbytery of Antioch (in Syria), commissioned Barnabas and Saul as its first foreign Missionaries.¹³⁹ Wherever those two¹⁴⁰ went throughout what is now Southern Turkey, they established Congregations of Christians and later 'ordained them **Elders** in every church."¹⁴¹

When doctrinal disputes arose needing action, representatives of the Congregations of Antioch in Syria (and from Turkish Cilicia too) gathered with representatives of the church in Jerusalem to deliberate about this matter as a **General Assembly**. That "Christian *Sanhedrin*" took decisions which would later be delivered as decrees for the Congregations "to keep."¹⁴²

Elders were established in every Congregation of Hebrew-Christians, both in Palestine and in the *Diaspora*.¹⁴³ So too, Elders were similarly established in the largely-Gentile Christian Congregations in the Presbytery of Ephesus (in the modern Western Turkey).¹⁴⁴ There they were required to take heed of the flock of Christ over which the Holy Ghost had made them Overseers or Bishops.¹⁴⁵

Meantime, the Judaistic Eldership continued to shrivel away. "The Jews...came to the...Elders and said, "We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul!".... Ananias the High Priest descended with the Elders...who informed against Paul...: "There is a certain man left in bonds...about whom...the Chief Priests and the Elders of the Jews...desired to have judgment against him."¹⁴⁶

Yet Christian Elders¹⁴⁷ or Pastoral Shepherds¹⁴⁸ or Bishops¹⁴⁹ were appointed more and more -- in the Congregation of Philippi in Northern Greece;¹⁵⁰ in the church of Corinth in Central Greece (where we are told ecclesiastical Elders or "Governments" were established);¹⁵¹ in the Congregations in Rome (where each appointed Elder "was to keep on ruling with diligence");¹⁵² and in the Congregations of Crete (by the apostolically-appointed Preacher-Evangelist Titus).¹⁵³ Thus, it would seem that Ruling Elders were installed over every Christian Congregation throughout the apostolic world.¹⁵⁴

Such Elders were always to be respected (even by the Apostles themselves) for "their work's sake" -- that is, simply on account of the Presbyterial Office they occupied.¹⁵⁵ In fact, even the Apostles themselves gladly submitted to the advice of the Elders-in-Session¹⁵⁶ -- just as the Elders-in-Session in turn submitted themselves to the decisions of the various larger Church Courts.¹⁵⁷ For the Elders themselves were to "rule well" and to watch over the sheep (as those who must give account). Should they (like Diotrophes) attempt to lord it over Christ's flock, they needed (and still need) to be lovingly though firmly rebuked.¹⁵⁸

The requirements and the complementary duties of the Office of Ruling Elder are to be derived from studying several passages of Scripture.¹⁵⁹ Together with the rest of the local Session, each Elder must indeed take care of the flock in general.

Yet each and every individual Elder must even more give particular attention to that little group of ten families of the flock -- a group of up to ten church families in his ward which the Session as a whole has assigned especially to his own personal care. A **ward**, then, is a group of **up to ten church families** which the Church Session (usually because of their geographical

proximity to one another) has assigned especially to the care of one Elder in particular. He must of necessity frequently visit them, "from house to house."¹⁶⁰

These requirements and duties include blamelessness and honesty (so that the Elder may boldly admonish the members of his little group who will then trust him and willingly confide in him).¹⁶¹ They include monogamy and sexual purity¹⁶² (so that he may fearlessly visit even the single ladies among his flock in their homes and at their sickbeds, as his Office requires him to do)¹⁶³

They also include vigilance¹⁶⁴ (so as to be able to watch over the souls of his sheep as his Co-Pastor).¹³⁵ Too, Ssobriety (or wisdom).¹⁶⁶ And good behaviour and hospitality¹⁶⁷ -- so as to make it easy for the sheep to come to him whenever they want to, and easy for them to welcome him whenever he needs to visit them.¹⁶³

While the Ruling Elder is never to "preach," he is to exhort and to have an aptness to teach (or the capability of instructing others).¹⁶⁸ He is also to have teachability (or the desire to be corrected especially by those who preach);¹⁶⁹ temperance (and no addiction to wine);¹⁷⁰ peaceableness (and no desire to brawl);¹⁷¹ diligence (or a love of work especially in church affairs as an Elder);¹⁷² and contentment (or an absence of covetousness or enslavement to filthy lucre).¹⁷³

Furthermore, a Presbyter should be one that rules his own house well, having his children in subjection with all gravity. For it a man does not know how to rule his own house – how shall he take care of the church of God?¹⁷⁴

An Elder should **not** be a new Christian (lest he becomes arrogant after his appointment as a Bishop).¹⁷⁵ He should be irreproachable even in the eyes of unbelievers¹⁷⁶ (whom he should also try to win for the Lord by both his actions and his words). He is to be a Steward -- or a true servant of the Lord.¹⁷⁷ And he is not to be self-willed, nor quick to get angry.¹⁷⁸

An Elder is to be a just or a good and a holy man and a lover of other good men¹⁷⁹ (or a Commandment-keeper and an admirer of those who try to keep all ten of God's holy Commandments).¹⁸⁰ He is to adhere to the true doctrine he has been taught, and he himself should sharply rebuke all false-teachers and their false-teachings.¹⁸¹

He needs to be a true spiritual Pastor or feeder of the flock, as he watches over the sheep.¹⁸² He is to function as a willing and a ready shepherd who does not constantly have to be constrained to go and take care of his sheep.¹⁸³

Above all, an Elder is to be a humble man (who never tries to throw his weight around). And he is to be an example to the flock, worthy of their love and respect and imitation. Apparently there are no Preachers in Heaven. Yet there, are twenty-four Elders – twelve representing the Old Testament Church and its twelve Patriarchs, and twelve representing the New Testament Church and its twelve Apostles.¹⁸⁴

Whenever glory and honour and thanks are given to God on His throne, those twenty-four Elders bow down in awe and worship the Lord. Clothed in spotless white, they wear crowns of gold. Yet every time they hear the *Trishagion* echo throughout the universe -- they fall down

before and worship God, and cast down their golden crowns before the throne, saying: 'You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power! For You have created all things, and for Your pleasure they are and were created!'¹⁸⁵

Those twenty-four Elders fall down before the Lamb, every one of them having harps and golden vials full of perfumes which are the prayers of saints. And they sing new song, saying: 'You are worthy...to open the seals of the book! For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings...to our God, and we shall reign on the Earth....

'Worthy is the Lamb Who was slain!... The twenty-four Elders fell down and worshipped Him.... The twenty-four Elders who sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces and worshipped God.... And the twenty-four Elders fell down and worshipped Him..., saying: 'Hallelujah!' For the Lord God omnipotent reigns!'¹⁸⁶

That is what the twenty-four Elders in Heaven do, who fall down to worship Jehovah-Jesus there. That too, after centuries of declension in World History, is what the Christian Elders did in the first century A.D. Thus they rebuilt the Church of God.

The Elders who rule well, are to be treated as worthy of **double honour**.¹⁸⁷ Yet every Elder must be God-fearing and truthful. He must be wise in understanding, of tested experience, and one who hates covetousness.

He needs to be altogether competent to rule people, and especially his own heart.¹⁸⁸ He is to be attentive, compassionate, articulate, diligent, blameless, maritally faithful, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, hospitable, apt to teach, teachable, peaceable, contented, patient, experienced, humble, of good reputation, patient, and joyful.¹⁸⁹

Moreover, his children (if any) must be faithful.¹⁹⁰ He himself must not be self-willed, short-tempered, or pugnacious.¹⁹¹ He is to be a lover of good men (or Commandment-keepers), just, holy, and temperate.¹⁹² He is to be teachable, learned, sound in doctrine, and one who needs to be able to exhort and to refute all gainsayers.¹⁹³ As one accountable for all souls under his care¹⁹⁴ -- he is to be intent, prayerful, and helpful especially in assisting the sick.¹⁹⁵ Last, he is to feed the flock of God in an exemplary way¹⁹⁶ -- and this he can only do if he himself is a true worshipper of God.¹⁹⁷

May all Ruling Elders (and preaching Elders) always remember the golden words of the great Apostle Peter. 'The Elders which are among you, I exhort -- I who too am an Elder!...

'Feed the flock of God among you, taking its oversight not by constraint but willingly; not for filthy lucre but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that does not fade away.'¹⁹⁸

'Likewise, you younger ones -- submit yourselves to the Elder! Yes, all of you be subject to one another -- and be clothed with humility. For God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble.

'Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God!¹⁹⁹ For there must be no place for Elders like Diotrophes,²⁰⁰ in any godly Session of the Church of the Triune God.

The Lord keeps on ruling! So may today's Elders themselves too themselves rule under His rulership – just as in Heaven, so also here and now on Earth!

DEGENERATION OF ELDERSHIP DOWN TO THE END OF THE MIDDLE AGES

Yet sadly, the Proto-Presbyterian Eldership soon became confused -- in the increasing Sacerdotalism of Post-Biblical Christianity. That arose, as the Totalitarianism of the surrounding Heathen politics and its Roman religion -- and the corrupted priesthood of Judaism -- more and more sank into the Christian Church.

Over the next four centuries Clement, Hermas, Cyprian, Ambrose and Jerome all supported the Biblical Eldership. But Ignatius, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and finally the Romish Papacy all overshadowed it -- under the control of an episcopalianized Bishop.

Later in fact, under the Romish Papacy, the Biblical Eldership seems to have disappeared altogether. And, under the Pontiff of Rome for some nine centuries -- to have remained obliterated, right down to the Protestant Reformation.

In the (Post-)Apostolic Fathers, Clement (who died around 100 A.D.) stated that "the daily sacrifices...are...offered...only at the altar...(after) being first carefully examined by the high priest.... It is disgraceful, beloved -- yes, highly disgraceful and unworthy of your Christian profession -- that such a thing should be heard of, as that the most steadfast and ancient church...should...engage in sedition against its Presbyters!"²⁰¹

By the time of Ignatius (who died around 117 A.D.), the Diaconate and the Eldership had been shrunk back to but one Deacon and one Elder per church. Indeed, the one Elder had already been elevated into an episcopal Bishop and the head of the local church.

Ignatius wrote of Burrhus your Deacon: "I beg he may continue longer...for your honour -- and that of your Bishop!... Being subject to the Bishop and the Presbytery, may you in all respects be sanctified!... It is fitting you should run together, in accordance with the will of your Bishop.... Your justly renowned Presbytery...is fitted...to the Bishop, as the strings are to the harp.... You must not do anything without the Bishop....

"Having beheld your Bishop..., I am struck with admiration.... By His silence, He [note the capital 'H!'] is able to accomplish more than they who talk [or preach?!] a great deal [like the Preachers previously did]. For he [the Bishop] is in harmony with the Commandments and ordinances of the Lord even as the strings are with the harp, and is no less blameless than was Zacharias the Priest.... Where the Shepherd is, there you as sheep must follow....

"See that you all follow the Bishop!... Let no man do anything without the Bishop!... Wherever the Bishop shall appear, there let the multitude [of the people] also be.... It is not lawful without the Bishop earlier to baptize or to celebrate a love-feast.... Reverence both God

and the Bishop!... He who does anything without the knowledge of the Bishop, does [in reality] serve the devil!"²⁰²

Still, yet less than a century after the completion of Holy Scripture, Hermas rightly notes that "the Presbyters...preside over the Church" -- and that "Bishops given to hospitality...always gladly received the Servants of God.... The Bishops never failed to protect...the widows and those who were in want, and always maintained a holy conversation."²⁰³

Yet, by the time of Irenaeus (who died around 195 A.D.), just over a century after the completion of the Bible, the false doctrine of apostolic succession began to reveal itself. Wrote he: "All therefore in every church who may wish to see the truth..., contemplate clearly the tradition of the Apostles!... We are in a position to reckon up those who were by the Apostles instituted Bishops in the churches, and [to demonstrate] the succession of these men to our own times.....

"They were desirous that these men should be very perfect and blameless in all things, whom also they were leaving behind as their successors.... [We do this I say,] by indicating that tradition derived from the Apostles of the very great...and universally-known church founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious Apostles Peter and Paul -- as also the faith preached to men which comes down to our time by means of the successions of the Bishops.

"For it is a matter of necessity that every church should agree with this church [of Rome] on account of its preeminent authority..., inasmuch as the apostolical tradition has been preserved continuously by those who exist.... The blessed Apostles, then, having founded and built up the Church -- committed into the hands of Linus the Office of the Episcopate.... To him succeeded Anacletus; and after him in the third place from the Apostles, Clement was allotted the Bishopric [of Rome]."²⁰⁴

Indeed, even according to Tertullian (who died around 220 A.D.), the one "whom Peter bade to take his place and sit upon this chair in mightiest Rome where he himself had sat, was Linus.... After him, (Ana)Cletus himself the fold's flock undertook. As his successor, Anacletus was by lot located. Clement follows him."²⁰⁵

Still, the A.D. 200-58 Cyprian contended it is of divine authority that the Presbyter be chosen in presence of the people and be approved by public judgment.²⁰⁶ And Augustine's mentor Ambrose (339-97 A.D.) complains that this custom [of the Ruling Elder] had fallen into desuetude through...the pride of the Teachers who wanted undivided power for themselves."²⁰⁷

Even as late as around 400 A.D., the great Scholar and Bible Translator Jerome still championed the equality of Bishops and Presbyters. In his *Epistle to Titus*, he says: "A **Bishop** is the **same** as a **Presbyter**.... Before dissensions were introduced into religion by the instigation of **the devil**..., churches were governed by a common **Council of Presbyters**.... Let **Bishops** know that they are **greater** than **Presbyters** more by **custom** than in consequence of our Lord's appointment!"²⁰⁸

In his *Letter 52 to Nepotian*, Jerome urges him: "Be obedient to your Bishop.... The Bishop combines in himself many titles.... **Bishops** should know themselves to be Priests (or

Presbyters), not lords. Let them render to the Clergy the honour which is their due, so that the Clergy may offer to them the respect which belongs to Bishops.

"There is a witty saying of the orator Domitius which is here to the point: 'Why am I to recognize you [the Supreme Bishop] as Leader of the Senate, when you will not recognize my rights as a private member?'... A Bishop and his Presbyters are like Aaron and his sons.... There should be but one Ministry.... It is a bad custom which prevails in certain churches, for **Presbyters** to be silent when Bishops are present.... "If anything," writes the Apostle Paul, "be revealed to another that sits by -- let the first hold his peace!" (First Corinthians 14:30-33).... A Bishop should rejoice in the discrimination which has led him to choose such for the Priests (or **Presbyters**) of Christ!"²⁰⁹

In his *Letter 69 to Oceanus*, Jerome wrote: "I bring our two Epistles of the Apostle -- the first to Timothy (First Timothy 3:1-7), and the second to Titus. In the first, is the following passage: 'If a man desires the office of a **Bishop**, he desires a good work. A Bishop then must be...the husband of one wife...that rules his own house well, having his children in subjection with all gravity.'

"Immediately at the commencement of the Epistle to Titus, the following behests are laid down: 'I left you in Crete...[to] ordain **Elders** (plural!) in every city..., if any be...the husband of one wife, having faithful children.... For a **Bishop** must be blameless, as the **Steward** of God (Titus 1:5-9).... Only monogamists should be chosen for the Clerical Office, whether as **Bishops** or as **Presbyters**'²¹⁰ -- or '**Elders**' in the Authorized Version.

In his *Letter 146 to Evangelus*, Jerome says: "The Apostle clearly teaches that **Presbyters** are the same as **Bishops**.... Listen to this passage: 'Paul and Timotheus...to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi with the Bishops and Deacons' (Philippians 1:1).... There is the following passage which clearly proves a **Bishop** and a **Presbyter** to be the same. Writing to Titus (1:5-7), the Apostle says: 'For this cause I left you in Crete, so that you should...ordain **Presbyters** in every city..., if any be...the husband of one wife, having faithful children.... For a **Bishop** must be blameless as the Steward of God'....

"Peter also says in his First Epistle (5:1-2): 'The **Presbyters** which are among you, I exhort -- I who am your **Fellow-Presbyter**.... In the Greek, the meaning is plainer. For the word used is *Episkopountes* -- that is to say, overseeing.... This is the origin of the name Overseer....

"Listen to...that son of thunder [the Apostle John]!... One of his Letters (Second John 1) begins thus: 'The **Presbyter** to the elect lady and her children [perhaps meaning 'to the Presbytery'].... And another (Third John 1) thus: 'The **Presbyter** to the well-beloved Gaius'....

"What function...belongs to a Bishop that does not also belong to a **Presbyter**?... Wherever there is a Bishop -- whether it be at Rome or at Engubium; whether it be at Constantinople or at Rhegium; whether it be at Alexandria or at Zoan -- his dignity is one."²¹¹

Even in his *Against the Pelagians*, Jerome writes: "The Apostle described the character of a Bishop when he wrote to [First] Timothy (3:2f): 'The **Bishop** must be...the husband of one wife...; one who rules well his own house, having his children in subjection with all modesty'....

"Writing also to his Disciple Titus (1:5f), he...points out what sort of Bishops he ought to ordain.... 'I left you in Crete, so that you should...appoint Elders in every city..., if any man is...the husband of one wife, having children that believe.... For the Bishop must be blameless."²¹²

So Jerome equates Bishops and Presbyters! They are to be men of one wife, and to rule their children well. For if a Bishop or Presbyter cannot rule his own household -- how shall he be able to rule the household of God?

After this, however, we see -- in Rome -- the rise of the Papacy! The Pope became a celibate, childless and wifeless tyrant. The Bishop of Rome gradually turned into the Pontiff, as the highest earthly Prophet-Priest-King. And Elders then became unknown, until the time of the Protestant Reformation -- when the Presbyters were resurrected and replaced the Pope as the Ruling Elders of Christ's Church.

CALVIN ON ELDERSHIP IN GENESIS AND EXODUS

Luther deprived the Pope of his ecclesiastical power, and instead subjected the Church to the government of the Christian State. But it was Calvin, the father of resurrected Presbyterianism, who subjected the depapalized Church -- to the Biblical control of the Church's own Ruling Elders.

Calvin's doctrine of Eldership runs right through the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation -- and then throughout Church History down to Calvin and forever therebeyond. To him -- Adam, Abel, Seth, Enoch and Noah were all Elders.

For by faith, said Calvin, 'the Elders had witness borne to them. By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the Word of God.... By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice.... By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death.... By faith, Noah...prepared an ark to save his household.... By faith, Abra(ha)m when he was called -- obeyed.'²¹³

Regarding Abram's Steward or Eldest Servant Eliezer, Calvin comments: "He also calls him the son of *Meshek*.... Some derive it from *shaakak*, which means to run to and fro -- and translate it Steward or Superintendent. Because he who sustains the care of a large house, runs hither and thither in attending to his business."²¹⁴

That is, according to the usual interpretation of the Hebrew phrase, the son or person to whom the house was left in charge by its Master. The various ancient versions, except the Syriac, agree in this interpretation.

When Joseph went to bury his father, Abraham's grandson Jacob -- all the Servants of Pharaoh, the Elders of his house and all the Elders of the land of Egypt, went with him.' Calvin rendered this '*ascenderuntque cum eo omnes servi Pharaonis Seniores domus ejus, et omnes Seniores terrae Aegypti.*'²¹⁵

God said to Moses: "Go and gather **the Elders** of Israel together and say to them, 'The Lord God of your fathers...appeared to me'.... I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt.... And they shall hearken....

"You shall come, you and **the Elders** of Israel, to the king of Egypt.... You shall say to him, 'The Lord God of the Hebrews has met with us.... Now let us go...three days' journey into the wilderness, so that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God!'"

Calvin comments: "Moses is commanded to begin with **the Elders**, and to speak to them concerning their coming deliverance -- so that they may thus by their authority arouse the body of the people to a good hope.... The children of Israel were assured that the end of their woes was near.... What had been handed down through the Patriarchs as to their future deliverance, was not entirely forgotten....

"They [**the Elders**] shall hearken to your voice.' This, many take to be a promise from God that they should be obedient.... He would command them by the mouth of Moses, and...then they would accompany him in bearing the message to Pharaoh."²¹⁶

The Bible then says: 'Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all **the Elders** of the children of Israel. And Aaron spake all the words which the Lord has spoken... And the people believed..., then they bowed their heads and worshipped.'

Calvin comments: "'Moses and Aaron went.... Faithfully and religiously, the two brothers executed the commands of God. They gathered together **the Elders** of the people -- because...God wished not to contend by means of the tumultuous and confused clamour of a mob.... 'And the people believed.'"²¹⁷

Next, 'Moses called for **all the Elders** of Israel, and said to them, 'Draw out and take for yourselves a lamb according to your families and kill the Passover (Lamb).... For the Lord...will not permit the destroyer to come in to your homes to smite you.'"

Calvin comments: "'Then Moses called for all **the Elders**.' His address is especially directed to **the Elders**, so that they might afterwards repeat it to the multitude. For he could not have been heard at the same time by so great a number of people."²¹⁸

Then, 'the Lord said to Moses, "Go...before the people, and take with you of **the Elders** of Israel... Smite the rock!"... And Moses did so in the sight of **the Elders** of Israel.... Moses' father-in-law took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God -- and Aaron came and **all the Elders** of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God....

'Moses' father-in-law said to him... "You shall **teach them** [**the Elders**]... You shall provide out of all the people **able men** such as fear God, men of truth hating covetousness -- and place such over them to be rulers of thousands (in the largest National Assembly) and rulers of hundreds (in the district State Assemblies), rulers of fifties (in the regional Presbyteries) and rulers of tens (in the local Sessions).... Let them **judge** the people!"... And Moses chose able men...and made them heads over the people -- rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And they judged the people at all seasons."²¹⁹

Calvin comments that Moses' father-in-law "worshipped...God with...faith.... It [that faith] was duly offered, because Moses and Aaron and **the Elders** openly professed themselves his companions and partook with him.... This is the object of...**government**, that God's tribunal should be exerted on Earth, wherein He may exercise **the Judge's** office....

"**Judges**...should not arrogate to themselves a power uncontrolled by any laws nor allow themselves to decide anything arbitrarily or wantonly. Nor...assume to themselves what belongs to God.... They are the **representatives** (*vicarios*) of God.... All private individuals...should not rashly appeal to **the...Judges**, but should approach them with pure hearts, as if inquiring of God."

So **the Judges** were chosen from **these Elders**. Moses was told: "You shall choose out and take the most worthy, so that such **an Office** be not entrusted rashly to anyone that offers'.... Among a free people..., **the Judges** should not be chosen for their wealth or rank but for their superiority in virtue....

"Four qualifications...must principally be regarded in the appointments.... Ability in business; the fear of God; integrity; and the contempt of riches.... Moses...designates strenuous and courageous persons.... He adds piety..., in that they should exercise their **Office** as having an account to render to God....

"Hatred of covetousness is demanded.... Since snares are so constantly set for **Judges** by the offers of pecuniary advantage, they would not be duly fortified against this mode of corruption unless they earnestly detested avarice."²²⁰

Next, at Mt. Sinai, 'Moses came and called for **the Elders** of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him.... And He said to Moses, "Come up to the Lord – you and Aaron...and seventy of **the Elders** of Israel, and worship!"....

'Then Moses went up..., and seventy of **the Elders** of Israel.... They saw the God of Israel..., but upon **the Nobles** of the children of Israel, He did not lay His hand. They too saw God, and **ate and drank**.... The Lord said to Moses..., "**Teach** them!".... Moses...went up into the Mount of God. And he said to **the Elders**: "You wait here for us!"²²¹

Comments the great Protestant Reformer John Calvin: "Here...arises a question respecting the seventy **Elders**.... We gather from this passage that even before they came to Mount Sinai, each tribe had appointed its **Governors** (*Praefectos*) who would make up this number.... When Moses afterwards desired to be relieved of his burdens, part of **the government** was transferred to these seventy persons (Exodus 18:18-26), since this number was already sanctioned by custom and use....

"It might also have been that the desire and intention of the Israelites was thus to celebrate the memory of their origin. For seventy persons had gone down into Egypt with Jacob.... In less than two hundred and twenty years after they went there, their race had increased to six hundred thousand besides women and children.... Seventy persons were appointed to **preside** over the whole people..., to trace the commencement of their race back to its very source....

"On the footstool (Exodus 24:10), Infinite Majesty appeared -- such as to strike **the Elders** with astonishment.... **The Elders** were not made participators of the prophetic gift.... (Yet **the Rulers** of Israel remained safe and sound.... If anyone of the people had attempted to do the same as **the Rulers**, he would have experienced...his destruction.... Free and bold access turned out successfully to **the Elders**..., because they obeyed the command of God..... What follows as to their eating [that of **the Nobles** in Exodus 24:11], I interpret to mean a solemn banquet which was a part or appendage of a sacrifice -- as we have seen in Exodus 18[12-26]."²²²

CALVIN ON ELDERSHIP IN LEVITICUS TO DEUTERONOMY

In Leviticus, God says: "If **the Priest** that is anointed do sin..., then let him bring for his sin which he has sinned a young bullock without blemish!... **The Elders** of the Congregation shall lay their hands upon the head of the bullock before the Lord.... When **a Ruler** has sinned..., he shall bring his offering, a kid of the goats, a male without blemish".... Moses called...**the Elders** of Israel...saying, "You must take a kid of the goats for a sin offering."²²³

Calvin comments: "He now distinguishes between different persons.... The more illustrious was his dignity, the more diligently and zealously ought his life to be confirmed to the model of holiness.... This in some measure related to all the Levites.... It now extends to all the Ministers and Pastors of the Church....

"The Priest...should come before God to perform the Office of reconciliation.... It was not lawful that more mediators should be appointed.... A peculiar atonement is also appointed for the transgression of **the Rulers**.... He undoubtedly designates the heads and **Governors** generally, because they who bear **rule** do more injury by their bad example than private persons. If then any of **the Judges** or **Governors** had sinned through error, he might indeed be set free by a lesser victim than the Priest.... Those in **authority** should more carefully keep themselves pure from every transgression."²²⁴

In Numbers, 'the Lord said to Moses, "Gather to Me seventy men of **the Elders** of Israel whom you know to be **the Elders** of the people and **Officers** over them, and bring them to the tabernacle...so that they may stand there with you!".... Moses went out...and gathered the seventy men of **the Elders**.... And the Lord came down...and took of the Spirit that was upon him and gave it to the seventy **Elders**.... And Moses got himself into the camp, he and **the Elders** of Israel."²²⁵

Calvin comments: "God complies with Moses by associating with him seventy companions..., taking from him some portion of His Spirit to distribute amongst the others.... As long as Moses alone was appointed to **rule** the people, he was so supplied with the necessary gifts of the Spirit -- as that his ability should not be inferior.... God now promises that the others shall be his companions, in such sort as that He divides his gifts among them all....

"The word 'Spirit' is here...applied...as if he had said: 'I had deposited with your gifts, sufficient for the **government** of the people. But now..., I will distribute His due measure to each of the seventy.... Since the race of Abraham had been increased in an incredible manner in two hundred and twenty years..., the seventy were **elected**.... When Moses went up into Mount Sinai

to receive the Tables from the hand of God, he took with him seventy **Officers**.... These same persons who had been appointed **leaders**, were called to this...**Office**....

"It is...certain that when the Jews [later] returned from the Babylonish captivity..., they followed the example here set them in the establishment of their *Sanhedrin*.... Also now-a-days, when He calls both the Pastors...and Magistrates to their Office..., He chooses rather with reference to their spiritual endowments.... He...commends those whom He has destined to any exalted **Office**....

"The narrative...declares in general terms that he [Moses] omitted nothing.... It would have been very inappropriate to speak only of the seventy **Elders**.... The **Elders** were called to the Tabernacle, so that they might there be appointed **Rulers** and **Officers**.... This was equivalent to their being set before God so that they might hereafter exercise their Office with more authority... They were not appointed to be Prophets.... So I understand what Moses says afterwards, 'and they did not add' (Numbers 11:25).... After the appointment of the seventy, all betook themselves to their own stations."²²⁶

Numbers also states that 'Moses rose up..., and **the Elders** of Israel followed him' And Numbers refers also to 'the Elders of Midian' and 'the Elders of Moab.'²²⁷

Here throughout, Calvin has the word **Seniores**. This shows the Eldership was not peculiar to Israel alone, but went right back to the dispersion of the nations at the tower of Babel.²²⁸

In his *Sermons on Deuteronomy* 1:9-15, Calvin states that "God...did always lay hold on them [His people] to **govern** them.... God should take order for **the governing** of them.... Although Moses saw the burden to be overheavy for him, yet he did not...renounce his calling to give over **the Office** that God had committed unto him, but sought to be helped and succoured, saying, 'Let men be chosen!' *etc.*

"Paul distributes **the Offices** in such a way, as every man must have his portion of them. Because there is not any one man that is able to do all.... We must also mark this saying of Moses, 'You must choose men of wisdom and of good skill, men well tried, so that they may be set over you according to your tribes -- even over thousands, over hundreds, and over fifties'....

"God **governs**.... First of all, He requires men that are stout -- such as are not womanish.... Have men this consideration with them, when they go about to choose **Officers of justice** -- that they will needs have the fear of God to be the first thing in that party?... Is it not as good as a wilful provoking of God's wrath and spiting of Him, when folk having free election -- whereas they should choose men to serve God and to be His **Officers** -- do instead keep routings in taverns or alehouses?... When God gives a people liberty to choose **Officers**, they must not abuse it but must use discretion in choosing them.... Elections shall never be well ordered, except God **overrule** them by His Holy Spirit!"²²⁹

In Deuteronomy 1:13-17, God elaborates on '**all the Elders**' in Exodus 18:12-26. 'Take for yourselves wise men...known among your tribes, and I will make them **Rulers** over you!' So Moses 'took...the **chief** of...tribes...and made them **heads**..., **captains** over thousands and...over hundreds and...over fifties and...over tens.... And I charged your **Judges** at that time.'²³⁰

Calvin comments: "Those who were to **preside** in judgment, were not appointed only by the will of Moses -- but **elected** by the votes of the people.... This is the most desirable kind of liberty.... We should not be compelled to obey every person who may tyrannically be put over our heads.... No one should rule, except he be approved of by us.... Moses recounts that he awaited the consent of the people, and that nothing was attempted which did not please them all....

"[He] distinguishes **the Judges**.... They should be wise; and understanding; and experienced.... Neither the greatest probity nor diligence would be sufficient for the **Office of Ruler**, apart from skill and sagacity.... I explain..., pointing out prudent persons endued with sound judgment and discretion.... Experience and acquaintance with business is required in **Judges**. Because none but the practised, are competent for the management....

"**Judges** should be restrained by fixed laws -- lest being left free, they should be swayed this way or that by favour or ill will.... Wherever there is a sufficient capacity of intellect, equity and rectitude will prevail.... Moses therefore requires magnanimity in **Judges**, so that they may not hesitate to bring upon themselves the hatred of any, in their defence of a good cause.... They are to be afraid of no mortal man, because 'the judgment is God's'....

"How absurd it is to turn from the right course, out of the fear of man! Because thus the majesty of God is prostituted and exposed to scorn.... Honour must be paid to God.... They should look upon all men as beneath them, and restrain the audacity of the wicked with such inflexible magnanimity that God alone may have the preeminence....

"Let all those who are called to any public **Office**, sustain themselves by this doctrine -- that they are doing God's work Who is well able to keep them safe from the violence as well as the craftiness of the whole world!... All posts of command are sacred to God, so that whosoever are called to them should reverently and diligently serve God -- and ever reflect that His is the dominion of which they are the Ministers."²³¹

Right after giving Moses His Ten Commandments, God said: "These words the Lord spake to all your **Assembly** on the Mount... And He wrote them in two tables of stone.... You came near to Me, even all **the heads** of your tribes and **your Elders**."²³²

Calvin comments: "Because he had been put between them by God, as their Minister, Moses...reminds...them...it was done at their petition and **request**.... He reminds them...they had been eye-witnesses of God's fearful power.... He expressly testifies that these **requests** were presented by the **heads** of their tribes and **their Elders**."²³³

God says: '**Judges** and **Officers** you shall make for yourselves in all your city-gates.... They shall **judge** the people with just judgment.... At the mouth of two witnesses or three witnesses, he that is worthy of death shall be put to death.... **The Elders** of his city shall send and fetch him...and deliver him..., that he may die.... At the mouth of two witnesses or at the mouth of three witnesses, the matter shall be established."²³⁴

So **the Judges** were apparently chosen from **the Elders**. Calvin comments: "'**Judges and Officers** you shall make'.... In order that the people may more readily submit to **Judges**, God

reminds them that the human race could not otherwise be preserved.... Magistrates are appointed by the suffrages of the people.... Let us learn that they are the necessary Ministers of God, to confine all men under the yoke of the laws.... It would be ridiculous to appoint **Governors**, if it were lawful to despise them with impunity."²³⁵

In Calvin's *Sermons on Deuteronomy*, Calvin says "God has created us after His Own image, and given us **dominion** and sovereignty over all His creatures.... He saw we could not maintain ourselves, unless there were laws to hold us in and **Judges** to execute those things....

"Without laws and Magistrates, we should be deprived of all God's blessings.... It is to no purpose to have good and just laws, unless there be men to set them in force and to put them in execution.... We must needs think it an inestimable gift, when God grants a people or nation liberty to choose their own **Judges** and magistrates....

"It is said expressly, 'in every city'.... If men should be driven to go far to seek justice..., seeing that misdemeanours are rife and touch us near -- if the redress should be delayed too long, it would not boot at all.... Therefore our Lord says that they [**Elders as Judges**] should be appointed in every city.... Our Lord will have **Judges** and Magistrates in every city.... The word 'to judge' imports to **govern**....

"If it happens that a man who hated his neighbour and killed him, flees to the place of privilege -- let **the Elders** of that place'..., **the Rulers or Governors**...'and **Judges** and Magistrates, take him and fetch him thence'....

"Our Lord will not have any one witness to be believed in any case.... Witnesses must needs be admitted.... God has ordained that there should be two witnesses before a case were **judged** -- that is to say, that a man should be convicted by two or three witnesses before sentence were given upon him as guilty....

"Also, we have to follow the rule which our Lord Jesus Christ gives us (Matthew 18:15f). Namely, that if any man has done amiss toward us, we warn him secretly. And that if he not receive our warning, we take two or three witnesses...so that in their mouth the thing may be the better established.... It behooves us to follow the order which we hear."²³⁶

God says: 'If one be found slain...and it not be known who has slain him, then your **Elders** and your **Judges** shall come forth.... The city which is next to the slain man, even **the Elders** of that city shall take a heifer....

'And **the Elders** of that city shall bring down the heifer to a rough valley...and shall strike off the heifer's neck.... All **the Elders** of that city next to the slain man, shall wash their hands over the heifer.'²³⁷

Calvin comments: "**The Elders** of the nearest city should take a heifer...and bring it into a stony and barren valley, cut off its neck..., wash their hands, and bear witness that their hands as well as their eyes are pure.... 'All the Elders of that city'...wash...their hands.... It was just as if they had presented the corpse of the dead man before God, and had stood themselves opposite to it to purge away the crime....

"Also, they [**the Elders**] ask for pardon -- because it might have been through their carelessness that the man was smitten.... They were again taught how greatly God abominates murders.... God at length declares that He will not impute it to them, when they have duly performed this rite of expiation.... In this way, they humbly reconciled themselves to Him and shut the door against murders for the time to come."²³⁸

In Calvin's *Sermons on Deuteronomy*, Calvin says: "Our Lord will have them make a new survey.... He will have **the Elders**, Judges and Priests to be present.... **Judges** and Ministers of Justice are warned here, to do their duties.... He says that 'the Priests shall resort there with **the Governors** and **Judges** of the city, and take a young heifer...and cut off the neck."²³⁹

God says: 'If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or...mother..., then shall his father and his mother...lay hold of him and bring him out to **the Elders** of his city... They shall say to **the Elders** of his city, "This our son is stubborn and rebellious".... And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones so that he dies.'

Calvin comments: "Moses declares that those are deserving of death who are of such a stubborn and intractable disposition as to reject the authority of their father and mother.... God requires the case to be decided on the evidence of the father and mother, and commands that it should **publically** be heard....

"A legal trial undoubtedly ensued.... A trial...implies...the son was heard in his defence.... When he was to be stoned by the whole people, it was necessary that he should first be convicted.... He was brought forth **publically**, so that he might be allowed to plead his cause."²⁴⁰

God says: 'If a man takes a wife..., and says..."When I came to her, I found her not a maiden" -- then shall the father of the woman and her mother...bring forth the tokens of the woman's virginity to **the Elders** of the city.... The woman's father shall say to **the Elders**, "I gave my daughter to this man as his wife.... But look, he has...said 'I did not find your daughter to be a maiden'.... Yet these are the tokens of my daughter's virginity"....

'And they [the father and mother] shall spread the cloth before **the Elders** of the city. Then **the Elders** of that city shall take that man [the husband], and chastise him."²⁴¹

Calvin comments: "God provides...lest a husband should unjustly bring reproach upon a chaste and innocent young woman.... This is indeed an act of gross brutality, that a husband wittingly and willingly should seek a false pretext for divorcing his wife by bringing reproach and infamy upon her.... **The Elders** of that city shall take that man. Calumny in this case received a threefold punishment."²⁴²

In his *Sermons on Deuteronomy*, Calvin says: "When **Judges and Magistrates** are warned about their Office, everyone in particular ought to gather an instruction from this.... Let us not wait for our punishment at the hands of **Judges and Magistrates** for falsely accusing anybody....

"**Judges and Magistrates** are bound to maintain the good name of them who are faultless.... God...appoints **Judges and Magistrates** to execute that which He commands.... This commandment is given to **Judges and Magistrates** touching civil order."²⁴³

God says: 'If a man does not want to take his [dead] brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the city-gate to **the Elders**, and say: "My husband's brother refuses to raise up for his brother a name in Israel; he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother!" Then his brother's wife shall come to him in the presence of **the Elders**, and loosen his shoe from his foot and spit in his face.'

Calvin comments: "His kinsman should obviate the dead man's childlessness.... It was a consolation in this condition, to hope for a borrowed offspring.... Boaz did not marry Ruth because he was the brother of her deceased husband, but only his near kinsman."²⁴⁴

In his *Sermons on Deuteronomy*, Calvin says: "The thing then which God has ordained in this place, is 'that the woman shall come to **the Elders** of the city'.... She was to come before **the Judges**, and to cause the next of kin...to be called. And **the Judges** were to do what they could to persuade him....

"It is said in this place 'that **the Judges** may persuade the man'... God would have **the Judges** speak to the man to persuade him as far as they were able. But if the man would not consent to them, they should content themselves.... We see that **the Magistrates** and other **Justicers** ought to abstain from using any force and violence in that thing which they cannot simply command."²⁴⁵

God says: 'Moses with **the Elders** of Israel commanded the people, saying: "Keep all the Commandments which I command you this day!"' Calvin comments: "And Moses with **the Elders**'.... God would have His precepts written on the doorposts.... When the precepts were written on the doors, everyone was admonished that his house was sacred to God.... Whosoever entered it, might know that it was as it were the sanctuary of heavenly doctrine, and...their zeal might be stirred up to the pure worship of God."²⁴⁶

Moses said to the people: 'All of you stand this day before the Lord your God -- you **Captains** of your tribes, your **Elders**, and your **Officers**.' Calvin comments: "Moses...address(es) their **Chiefs**.... After having begun with the **Officers**, the **Elders**, and men -- he descends to the little children and the wives."²⁴⁷

In his *Sermons on Deuteronomy*, Calvin adds:²⁴⁸ "Moses speaks expressly both of men, women, little children, **Governors**, the **Elders** of the people, **all the Chief** of the people.... Moses speaks of **Princes** and **Governors**.... Moses in this place observed great order -- in saying that the **Heads** and **Rulers** and **the greatest of the people** were there to bind themselves to God."

God says: 'Moses wrote this Law, and delivered it to...**all the Elders** of Israel.... Moses commanded..."Gather to me **all the Elders** of your tribes and your **Officers**, so that I may speak these words in their ears.'

Calvin comments: "The addition of '**the Elders**' is not superfluous. For although the Office of teaching was not committed to them, yet were they given as **Coadjutors**...in order that they might uphold the doctrine of the Law and not permit it to be scorned.... Nor do the(y)...duly fulfil their duty, if they do not keep their subjects to the study of religion.... He (Moses) commands **the Elders** and Officers...to be called to listen.... **The Heads** of tribes and **the Princes** of the

people, each of them led their band.... The assembling of **the Elders** here mentioned, is so far from excluding the rest of the multitude that it rather indicates that the whole people were gathered together.... He did not 'call Heaven and Earth to record against' **the Officers** only.... Under **the Leaders**, therefore, the whole multitude is included."²⁴⁹

In Calvin's *Sermons on Deuteronomy*, he says "that Moses having written the Law, committed it to...'all the **Elders** of Israel' which had the charge and authority to **govern** the people."²⁵⁰ Hence, to Calvin, '**the Elders**' were Governors called '**to govern**.'

CALVIN ON ELDRSHIP FROM JUDGES TO JEREMIAH

After the death of Moses -- God said the Minister 'Joshua rent his clothes..., he and **the Elders** of Israel, and put dust upon their heads.' Calvin comments "Joshua...and **the Elders** not only gave themselves up to sorrow and sadness, but engaged in solemn mourning...by tearing their garments and throwing dust on their heads.... In turning straightway to God..., they are influenced by faith.... They cast their cares upon God."²⁵¹

Too, 'Joshua rose up early in the morning..., he and **the Elders** of Israel, before the people of Ai.... All Israel and **their Elders** and **Officers** and their **Judges**, stood on this side of the ark...as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded." Calvin comments: "'All Israel and their **Elders** (...stood on this side of the ark...as Moses...had commanded).'"²⁵²

From the Elders, the Judges were appointed. 'Joshua called for all Israel and for their **Elders**.... And Joshua...called for **the Elders** of Israel.... Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of **the Elders** that outlived Joshua.... And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of **the Elders** that outlived Joshua.'

Comments Calvin:²⁵³ "He (Joshua) invited all Israel.... He invited **their Elders**.... The summons was addressed specially to **the Heads** and **Prefects**.... **The Elders**...and others were commanded to come, and might bring as many persons as were disposed to come along with them."

In Psalm 107:29-32, it states that God 'makes the storm a calm.... Let them exalt Him also in the Congregation..., and praise Him in the **Assembly** of **the Elders**!'

Calvin comments: "The Spirit of God by this change of the storm into a calm, places the providence of God as presiding over all.... Gratitude...deserves not only to be acknowledged privately or to be mentioned in the family, but...should be praised and magnified in all places -- even in the great **Assemblies**. He makes specific mentioned of **the Elders**, intimating that the more wisdom and experience a person has, the more capable is he of listening to and being a witness of these praises!"²⁵⁴

Yet apart from his five volumes on the Psalms, from Judges to Ecclesiastes Calvin wrote no commentaries. However, as seen earlier above,²⁵⁵ there are more than thirty references to the Eldership in Holy Scripture from the book of Judges down to the time of Joel and Isaiah.

Joel states: 'Hear this, you **old men!**' Calvin comments: "He expressly addressed **the old**, because experience teaches men much.... **The old**, when they see anything new or unusual, must know that it is not according to the ordinary course of things....

'The Prophet directs here his discourse to **the old**.... Let **the old** hear, who have been accustomed for many years to many revolutions. Let them now answer me whether in their whole life...they have seen any such thing."²⁵⁶

'Call a solemn **Assembly**, gather **the Elders!**' Calvin comments: "It appears that there was a solemn **Convocation**.... He...bids **the old** to be gathered'.... He begins with **the old**, and justly so.... Yesterday he said: 'Hear, **you aged!** He addressed those who by long experience had learnt in the world many things unknown to the young....

'Now, the Prophet means by **the old** those to whom was intrusted the **public government**.... Through their slothfulness, they had suffered the worship of God and all integrity to fall into decay.

"Rightly does the Prophet wish them to be **Leaders** and **Precursors** to the people in their confession of repentance.... It behooved them, on account of their **Office**..., to lead the way.... The whole people were implicated in guilt.... For he bids them all to come with **the Elders**."²⁵⁷

'Call a solemn **Assembly!** Gather the people! Sanctify the Congregation! **Assemble the Elders!**' Calvin comments: "'proclaim,' he says, 'a meeting!.... Call the people, sanctify the **Assembly!**'... The people, in order to engage in holy services, performed those rites.... The Prophet them alludes to these legal purgations, when he says 'Sanctify the **Assembly!**'

"He...adds 'Bring together **the old!**'... With regard to **the old**..., they are separately named because they ought to have taken the **lead** by their example.... We know that it is a duty incumbent on **the old** to **govern** others.... The Prophet bids here **the old** to be called. For it behooved them to be **the Leaders** of others in confessing their repentance."²⁵⁸

In the time of Jeremiah, 'certain of **the Elders**...spoke to all the Assembly.... Saying: "Micah...spoke to all the people, saying...'Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps.'"

Calvin comments: "When therefore **the Elders** saw that wrath was still burning in the people..., they made use of this discourse.... The **Elders** from the people of the land rose up'.... They were called **Elders**.... They were men of **authority**.... They spoke to 'the whole Assembly of the people'....

"When therefore the kind **Elders** saw that the minds of the people were still exasperated, they employed a moderating language.... **The Elders** said that Micah had spoken to the whole people, saying 'Thus says Jehovah, "Zion shall be plowed like a field.'"²⁵⁹

God said: 'These are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the Prophet sent from Jerusalem to the residue of **the Elders** which were carried away captives.' Calvin comments: "He wrote a book to the remaining **Elders**.... Many of that age had died.... The old who approach near the

goal of life, die first.... He wrote to them who still remained alive.... His prophecy was designed for them all.... He did not however wish to exclude the aged from the comfort of which God designed them to be partakers.... Knowing that there would be a happy end to their captivity, provided they retained resignation of mind."²⁶⁰

CALVIN ON ELDERSHIP FROM THE EXILE TO CHRIST

After the collapse of Jerusalem, Jeremiah's Lamentations state that the '**Elders** gave up the ghost in the city.' Calvin comments: "It is...added...My **Elders** expired in the city'.... **The Elders** perished through famine, because they could not find food.... **The Elders** sought food, because long abstinence urged them.... It was very said that...**the Elders** were thus reduced to want."²⁶¹

'**The Elders**...sat upon the ground.... They had cast up dust upon their heads. They had girded themselves with sackcloth.' Calvin comments: "The Prophet...says that '**the Elders**' as in hopeless despair were lying 'on the ground'; that they 'cast dust of their heads'; that they were 'clad in sackcloth'.... **The Elders** knew not what to do.... The Prophet does not mean that **the Elders** by adopting these rites professed to repent.... **The Elders** had no resources.... **The Elders** did lie down on the ground, as it is usual with those who have no remedy."²⁶²

'The anger of the Lord divided them [the people].... They did not favour **the Elders**.' Calvin comments: "The Prophet...adds that they [the people]...'showed no pity to **the Elders**'.... The people...had despised **the aged**.... There had been no account made of **the aged**.... **The aged**...were in **authority** when the kingdom was yet standing.... They had been...trodden under feet."²⁶³

'The faces of **Elders** were not honoured.... **The Elders** have ceased from the city-gate.' Calvin comments: "He adds that 'the faces of **the aged** were not honoured'.... Some honour is always rendered to **old age**.... That time of life is commonly regarded with reverence. When, therefore, no respect is shown to **the aged** -- the greatest barbarity must necessarily prevail.... The city was reduced to ruins.... When cities are inhabited, **Judges** sit at the city-gate.... But he says that there were no judgments.... It was then the same as though all civil order had been abolished."²⁶⁴

Even during the Babylonian captivity, Ezekiel sat with his Elders. He writes: 'I sat in my house, and the Elders of Judah sat before me.' Calvin comments: "By '**Elders** of Judah' I...understand...those who...should be witnesses of this prophecy.... All excuse and pretence of mistake was taken away from them."²⁶⁵

Ezekiel also writes: 'Certain of **the Elders** of Israel came to me and sat in front of me.' Calvin comments: "Here Ezekiel relates an event worthy of notice.... This was...a real transaction.... Some of **the Elders** of Israel came to him for the sake of consultation."²⁶⁶

In Ezekiel twenty, the prophet further writes that 'certain of **the Elders** of Israel came to enquire of the Lord, and sat before me. Then the Word of the Lord came to me, saying "Son of man, speak to **the Elders** of Israel!"'

Calvin comments here: "Some of **the Elders** of Israel were chosen to interrogate him [Ezekiel]. We know this to be customary.... Ezekiel say 'that **the Elders** of Israel came to consult God.' The verb *deresh* properly signifies 'to seek'.... It is here received for 'to consult' or 'inquire into'.... It is not surprising that **the Elders** came by public consent to the Prophet....

"It is probably that **the Elders** of Israel came and were sent to inquire concerning either the prosperous or disastrous events of their captivity.... The clause which I have noticed contains some useful instruction. "**The Elders** of Israel came to consult God, and sat before the Prophet'.... They followed what God had commanded in His Law....

"God in some way brought Himself forward, whenever He instructed His servants by the Spirit of prophecy. So when **the Elders** of Israel came to the Prophet, they are said to come to God Himself.... He appointed His servant, by whom He would speak."²⁶⁷

Calvin then died, right after commenting on Ezekiel twenty. At an earlier stage, however, he also commented on the New Testament (some five centuries later). We now look at those comments.

CALVIN ON THE ELDERSHIP FROM CHRIST TO ACTS

In the time of Christ, the Scribes and the Pharisees in Israel had greatly deteriorated. They 'came to Jesus...saying, "Why do your Disciples transgress the tradition of **the Elders** [of Judaism]?".... For the Pharisees...do not take food, without frequently washing their hands -- holding the traditions of **the Elders**.... The Pharisees and Scribes asked him, saying "Why don't your Disciples walk according to the tradition of **the Elders**?""

Calvin comments: "They reckoned it unbecoming...ceremonies which were [just] 'traditions of **the Elders**' and the practice of which was held sacred by 'the Scribes' [who claimed to uphold Scripture] -- should not be observed.... Christ declares them...mistaken who bring forward...the commandments of men,' or seek to obtain from them the rule for worshipping God."²⁶⁸

'From that time forth, Jesus began to show his Disciples how He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many thing from **the Elders**.[of Judaism], and be killed."²⁶⁹ Calvin comments: "Christ reminds His Disciples of what 'He must suffer'.... To them, it was a distressing occurrence that He should 'be rejected by **the Elders**' [of the Judaists]..., who held **the government** of the Church [at that time]."²⁷⁰

After Christ's resurrection, 'the Chief Priests..., having **assembled** with the [Judaistic] **Elders**..., entered into consultation. They gave a large sum of money to the soldiers [appointed to guard Christ's tomb], saying: "Say that his Disciples came by night and stole him while you were asleep!".... This statement is currently reported among the Jews, till the present day.'

Comments Calvin: "It was the finishing stroke of the vengeance of God, to blind the Jews.... But though this falsehood obtained currency among the Jews, this did not prevent the truth of the Gospel from flying at liberty to the very ends of the Earth -- as it always rises victorious over all the obstacles in the World!"²⁷¹

So from Christ's resurrection onward, the unbelieving Judaistic Elders are rejected. Having betrayed the Pre-Judaic Trinitarian God by lapsing into Judaistic Unitarianism, they were now replaced by Christian Elders who re-asserted God's Trinitarianism and who boldly upheld the resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ.

After the Disciples were called 'Christians' first in Antioch, those there sent relief to their brethren in Judaea -- 'to **the [Christian] Elders**' there. Calvin comments: "Two things must be noted here. First, that the Antioch church chose men who were trustworthy and of proved honesty to convey their blessing. Secondly, that they sent it to the **Elders**, who would disburse it wisely.

"**Elders**' is the name given to those in whose hands was the **government** of the **Church**.... The Deacons were in charge of tables. But in such a way that they were still under **the Elders**, and did nothing without their **authority**."²⁷² For in the Church, the Christian Elders had now replaced the Elders of degenerate Judaism.

Wherever the Apostles Paul and Barnabas went, 'they appointed...**Elders** [plural!] in every church.'²⁷³ Calvin comments: "I interpret *Presbuteros* [plural] here, as those on whom the Office...had been enjoined.... From what Paul says (First Timothy 5:17)..., some were only **censors of morals**.... Luke (in Acts 14:23) says that **they** were set over **every** church....

"The Apostles...had appointed (them) by **votes** (*suffragiis creassent*). The Greek word *cheirotonein* means to determine something by raising hands, as is usually done in the Assemblies of the people.... Paul and Barnabas are said to 'appoint Presbyters'.... They allow it to take place by **the votes** of all.... **The people had a free election**."²⁷⁴

'Certain men who came down from Judaea taught the Brethren [who had formerly been Heathen, that they needed to be circumcised]... When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them [the Judaizers], they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain other of them should go up to Jerusalem to the Apostles and **Elders** about this question.... When they were come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and by the Apostles and **Elders**.... And the Apostles and **Elders** came together for to consider this matter....

'Then it pleased the Apostles and **Elders**...to send chosen men...to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas.... And they wrote letters by them, after this manner: "The Apostles and **Elders**...send greeting to the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia.... It seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you...who shall also tell you the same things by mouth.... Abstain from meats offered to idols; and from blood...; and from fornication.... If you keep yourselves from this, you shall do well.

'They went through the cities. They delivered them the decrees -- to keep what was ordained by the Apostles and **Elders**.... And so the churches were established in the faith, and increased in number daily.'²⁷⁵

Comments Calvin: "It is not something without precedent, if controversies over doctrine still arise among those who profess the same Gospel.... 'Dissension had arisen'.... The servants of Christ must observe...moderation.... If at any time Satan stirs up disturbances and contentions, let them try to settle them....

"They appointed [Paul and Barnabas]...to go up.' The Spirit of God suggested this remedy for pacifying the disturbance.... It may well be asked with what intention the men of Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas to the rest of the Apostles.... All they we looking for, was for the Apostles to support the good cause....

"All the holy **Synods** have been convened from the beginning, for the same purpose.... Men who are eminent and well-versed in the Word of God might put an end to controversies -- not in accordance with their own opinion, but in conformity with the will of God....

"It cannot be denied that whatever excellence every flourished and was vigorous in the Church [from 33 A.D. to about 133 A.D.], began to perish after a hundred years [or by about 140 A.D.].... Reject the triflings of the [later] Papists, who...bring in deceiving masquerades for legitimate Councils!....

"He [Luke, the writer of the book of Acts,] then assigns a special place to the Apostles and **Presbyters** -- by whom...Paul and Barnabas were received.... It is evident how brotherly and human a spirit there was among the Apostles and **Presbyters**, because...they receive Paul and Barnabas courteously and extol the grace of God....

"The Apostles and **the Elders** were gathered together'...who by virtue of their **Office** were legitimate **Judges** of this matter.... Luke expressly mentions the Apostles and **Presbyters**, as they were...capable **Judges**....

"Here a form and order is prescribed by God, in convening **Synods**.... The Apostles and **Presbyters** wisely resolved to send...leading men [to] appear with the letter [from the Synod].... The Apostles and **Presbyters** link themselves as associates to the Holy Spirit.... It was by His dictation, that they came to a decision about what they were writing.... The best bond for fostering concord among the churches, was to observes what had been settled."²⁷⁶

'From Miletus, he [Paul] sent to Ephesus and called **the Elders** of the church.... They came to him. He said to them, "I kept back nothing..., but have shown you and taught you publically and from house to house.... Take heed therefore to yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you **Overseers**, to feed the Church of God!"

Calvin comments that Paul was "summoning the **Presbyters** (*Presbuteros*) of Ephesus.... They are not annoyed at obeying one of Christ's Apostles.... Those who are called **Elders** (*Seniores*) were...men who **ruled** over the Church.... Those who are placed in **authority** to **rule** over others, are called '**Ancients**' (*Senes*) and 'Fathers' (*Patres*)....

"He [Paul as their Fellow-Elder] taught not only all in the Assembly, but individuals in their homes.... Those who learn are also warned that, if they do indeed wish to be counted among the flock of Christ, they must admit **the Pastors** as often as they come to them, and that private warnings are not to be avoided....

"He now...gives many reasons to show that they [**the Presbyters**] must be diligent and watchful.... They have been called to this **Office** not by mortal man but by the Holy Spirit.... They are to devote their care to the Church of God, over which they **rule**....

"The Holy Spirit has appointed you **Bishops** (*Episkopous*). By the very name Bishops (or) **Overseers**, he warn that it is as if they have been set on a watch-tower from which they keep watch for the common safety of all.... About the word Bishops, we must briefly note that Paul calls all the Ephesian **Presbyters** this.... Bishops do not differ from Presbyters in any way....

"The Greek verb *poimainein* means to feed -- but, by an apt similitude, it is transferred to any sort of **rule**.... There is no place for laziness in such an arduous **Office**.... There is no excuse for those whom God appoints as **Stewards** of His family..., if they do not diligently devote themselves to their duties!"²⁷⁷

CALVIN ON THE ELDERSHIP IN THE CHRISTIAN EPISTLES

The Epistle of James was perhaps the earliest Christian epistle ever written. James asks his Christian brethren: 'Is any sick among you? Let him call for **the Elders** [plural!] of the church, and let them pray over him... And the prayer of faith shall save the sick.'²⁷⁸

Calvin comments: "The gift of healing...continued. He [James] directs the sick to have recourse to that remedy.... The design of James was...to commend the grace of God which the faithful might then enjoy.... He ordered **the Presbyters** to be sent for.... '**The Presbyters**' or **Elders** 'of the church.' I include here generally all those who presided over the Church.... **Presbyters or Elders**...chosen from the people to be as it were **censors** to protect **discipline**....

"**Every church** had...its own **Senate**, chosen from men of weighty and of proved integrity.... He ordered them to send for **the Elders**, as being those in whom the power and grace of the Holy Spirit more particularly appeared."²⁷⁹ As Calvin says in his *Institutes*, "James...ordered **the Presbyters** of the Church to be called to anoint the sick."²⁸⁰

In the Epistle to the Romans, Paul refers to '**him** (masculine) who **rules**.' Calvin comments: "When he speaks of those who **rule** (*proistamenous*), Paul is properly referring to those to whom the **government** of the Church was committed. These were **the Elders** (*Seniores*), who resided over and **ruled** the other members, and exercised **discipline**....

"Great care is required from those who are charged with the security of all, and great diligence from those who are in duty bound to keep watch day and night for the safety of all.... Paul was (here)...speaking of... **the Elders** who were the **Judges** of morals (*morum Censores*)."²⁸¹

"In the Epistle to the Romans (12:7f)...., he enumerates...**Offices** as...**Governments**.... By these **Governors** I understand **Seniors** selected from the people to unite with the **Bishops** in pronouncing censures and exercising discipline. For this is the only meaning which can be given to the passage 'he that **rules** with diligence' (Romans 12:8).

"From the beginning, therefore, each church had its **Senate** composed of...venerable men.... This arrangement was not confined to one age, and therefore we are to regard the **Office** of **Government** as necessary for all ages.... He (God Himself) is present and also presides in...exercising **judicial equity**. This, Paul also plainly teaches when he enumerates **Offices of rule**....for the edification of the Church (Romans 12:8). In that place..., he is properly speaking

of **the Senate** of grave men who were appointed in the Primitive Church to taken charge of **public discipline**.... This order is mentioned by Paul...in the Epistle to the Romans (12:8), when he says 'he **rules** with diligence.'²⁸²

In First Corinthians twelve, Paul says 'God has set some in the Church...[as] Governments.' Calvin comments: "Now he takes up the discussion of **Offices**.... Some of the Offices to which Paul is referring, are permanent.... I take '**Governments**' to mean **Elders** (*Seniores*), who were responsible for disciple. For the Early Church has its 'Council of **the Elders** ' (*Senatus*), to keep the people in uprightness of life.... '**Government**' was therefore carried out by **Presbyters**..., in gravity...and authority."²⁸³

Further: "In...the First Epistle to the Corinthians (12:28), he enumerates...**Offices** as...**Governments**.... By these **Governors** I understand **Seniors** selected from the people to unite with the **Bishops** in pronouncing censures and exercising discipline.... This **Office**...he calls *kuberneeseis*, '**Governments**' (First Corinthians 12:28)....

"The whole jurisdiction of the Church relates to **discipline**.... The Church of God...needs a kind of spiritual **Government**.... This order is mentioned by Paul in the First Epistle to the Corinthians (12:28), under the name of '**Governments**.'²⁸⁴

In his Epistle to the Philippians, Paul writes to specifically all **the Presbyters** (plural) at Philippi. For he writes to 'all the saints...which are at Philippi, with **the Bishops** (*Episkopois*) and Deacons (both plural and both masculine).'

Calvin comments: "We may infer from this, that the name '**Bishop**' is common..., inasmuch as he assigns **several** to **one church**.... Bishop and Pastor are synonymous....

"This is one of the passages which Jerome (*circa* A.D. 400) quotes for proving it, in his *Epistle to Evagrius* (and *Evangelus*) -- and in his *Exposition of the Epistle to Titus*. [Only] afterwards the custom prevailed that only the one whom **the Presbyters** in each church appointed over their college, was called Bishop.

"This originated in a human custom, and rests on no Scriptural authority.... From the corrupted signification of the word, this evil has resulted that -- as if **all Presbyters** were not colleagues called to the same office -- one of them under the cloak of a new name usurped dominion over the others!"²⁸⁵

"He (Paul) mentions the **Bishops** (plural!) of the Philippians. And, in his Epistle to Colosse (1:1 *cf.* 4:17), also "Archippus the Bishop of the Colossians."²⁸⁶

In his First Epistle to the Thessalonians, God says: 'Know them which labour among you and are **over** you (*proïstamenous*) in the Lord and **admonish** you!... **Esteem them** very highly in love, for their work's sake!.... **Warn** them that are **unruly**!'

Comments Calvin: "It is...in the interests...of the whole Church that those who **govern** it faithfully, should be held in esteem.... He further describes the(ir) kind of labour, by adding who '**admonish**' or instruct you....

"He bids his readers pay more than ordinary respect to such as...**govern** only for the purpose of serving the Church.... They are to be honoured more than abundantly.... He bids honour to be bestowed upon those who labour...and faithfully **govern**...'and are **over** you in the Lord'....

"This appears to have been added, to denote spiritual **rule**.... Because the Lord would have the **government** of the Church to be especially acknowledged as His Own, those who **govern** the Church in the name and by the commandment of Christ are for this reason expressly described as being **over**, in the Lord....

"**Admonish** the **disorderly**'...by...correcting and arousing!... The Apostle...commands the **disorderly** -- *i.e.* those who live in an **undisciplined** way -- to be **admonished**. **Admonition** is used to mean the **reproof** by which they are **restored** to order. For they deserve greater strictness, and cannot be brought to **repentance** by any other remedy."²⁸⁷

In the First Epistle to Timothy, Paul declares: 'If a man desires the office of a Bishop, he desires a good work.... A Bishop...must be...the husband of one wife..., one that rules well his own house, having his children in subjection.... If a man does not know how to rule his own house -- how shall he take care of the Church?'

Comments Calvin: "Having just forbidden the teaching Office to women [in First Timothy 2:11-15, Paul immediately in chapter 3:1-7] "now takes the opportunity to speak of that Office itself. His reason is first to make it clear that he had good reasons for excluding women from the exercise of such a demanding duty.... Thus the connection with the previous passage is in my view, as if Paul had said that so far from women being fit to obtain that Office -- not even men should be admitted to it without discrimination....

"If the objection is raised that the **government** of the Church is so difficult that it ought to terrify [even] **men** of sound judgment, rather than entice them -- I reply that godly men desire it.... We should also note what Paul means here by the Office of **Bishop** -- especially in view of the fact that the early generations [of the later Church] were led away from the true meaning, by the custom of their times.... Let us therefore bear in mind that this word means the same as...**Presbyter**....

"Both here and in the first chapter of Titus, Paul's words are 'who **is** the husband' - not 'who has **been** the husband' (of one wife).... The only right exegesis, is that of Chrysostom who takes this to be an express prohibition of polygamy.... Paul is rejecting from the episcopate those who have in the past been guilty of such an office....

"Paul...requires(s) of a Bishop that he should be...experience(d) in the ordinary life of men.... He should be a good and well-tested family man.... A man who does not know how to rule his own family, is unsuited to govern in the Church of God.... The man who here wins the Apostle's approval, is...he who has learnt to **rule** his family with wholesome **discipline**."²⁸⁸

As Calvin adds in his *Sermon*: "He that will do his duty well, being a Shepherd of a Congregation, must be as it were a father of all the faithful. Now if a man cannot **govern** two or three children which are in his house...when they are his own children..., how can he govern them that are far off?.... How can he keep men in awe, when his own wife will not be subject

to him?... It be requisite in all Shepherds that they be well able **ruling** householders, and know what it is to **govern** children well."²⁸⁹

Paul also says: 'Let **the Elders** that **rule** well, be counted worthy of double honour.' Here Calvin comments: "I maintain in the good order of the Church, it is highly necessary that the Presbyters should not be neglected -- but that due regard should be paid to them.... Here, *Presbuteros* describes...an **Office**....

"Paul has formerly commanded that widows should be held in honour.... Presbyters are more worthy of honour than they.... But in order to make it clear that he does not commend shams, he adds 'who **rule** well' -- that is, who discharge their **Office** faithfully and diligently."²⁹⁰

Calvin states of God that under the "Fifth Commandment..., the degrees of **dignity** appointed by Him must be held inviolable.... When the Apostle says 'Let the Elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour' (First Timothy 5:17) -- he refers not only to the **reverence** which is due to them, but [also] to the recompense to which their services are entitled."²⁹¹

Calvin comments on First Timothy 5:17f: "To maintain the good order of the Church, it is highly necessary that the **Presbyters** should not be neglected -- but that due regard should be paid to them.... Here, *Presbuteros* describes...an **Office**.

"I have no objection to Chrysostom's interpretation of 'double honour' as meaning support and reverence.... Paul has formerly commanded that widows should be held in honour. But **Presbyters** are more worthy of honour than they....

"From this passage, it may be inferred that there are two kinds of **Presbyters**.... They were not all ordained to teach.... Some who ruled well and honourably...did not hold a Teaching Office. The people elected earnest and well-tried men who...in a common Council and with the authority of the Church would administer discipline and act as **censors** for the correction of morals. Ambrose (339-97 A.D.) complains that this custom had fallen into desuetude through...the pride of the Teachers who wanted undivided power for themselves."²⁹²

'Against **an Elder**, receive not an accusation -- but before two or three witnesses!' Calvin comments: "Paul has good reason for preventing such a great injustice, and he says that **Presbyters** are not to be given over to the malice of evil men till they have been convicted by legal testimony.... Insolent tongues should be restrained from defaming **Presbyters** with trumped-up accusations.... Yet...every one of them who behaves badly, should be severely corrected....

"I take this injunction to apply to **Presbyters**.... For just as **Presbyters** show the way to others by the example of an honourable life -- so, if they go wrong, it is right that severe discipline should be exercised against them as an example to all.... If any **Presbyter** commits a fault..., it is clearly preferable that he should be admonished!"²⁹³

In the Epistle to Titus, Paul says: 'I left you in Crete, so that you should...ordain **Elders** [plural!] in **every city**..., if any be...**the husband of one wife**, having **faithful children**.... For a **Bishop** must be blameless, as the Steward of God.'

Calvin comments: "Appoint **Elders** (plural!) in every city'.... **Elders** or **Presbyters** (*Seniores*)...were chosen for this **Office**.... It has always been the practice for **Governors** to be called, for honour's sake, **Elders**.... Luke says of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 12:23 that they ordained **Elders** (plural!) in every church.... They ordained suitable men who had been elected or asked for by the people.... Paul tells them to elect men who are husbands of one wife, not men who have been so....

"How can a man rule the Church, if he cannot control his own house?... His whole household must reflect a chaste and honourable discipline.... The children should be believers, so that it may be obvious that they have been nurtured in the sound teaching of godliness.... They must not be unruly. For he who cannot obtain any reverence or submission from his children -- could scarcely restrain his people by the bridle of his discipline!...

"Paul...gives the honourable title of **Stewardship** -- that is, it is a **Government** of God's house.... This passage plainly shows that there is no difference between a **Presbyter** and a **Bishop**.... He now freely applies the second title to those he has formally called **Presbyters**.... He uses both names indiscriminately with the same meaning....

"It is clear from this, how much deference has [later] been paid to human opinions! Since the language used by the Holy Spirit [here] has been set aside, and the usage introduced by the will of men has prevailed [subsequently].

"For my own part, I find no fault with the custom which has prevailed from the very earliest days of the Church -- whereby each Assembly of Bishops [or Presbyters] has one man as Moderator. But to take the title of the Office which God has give to all, and to transfer it to one man and deprive the rest of it [as was done in Post-Biblical times] -- is both unjust and absurd.... To pervert the language of the Holy Spirit so as to make the very words have a different meaning from the one He has chosen -- smacks of excessive and unholy temerity!"²⁹⁴ Indeed, "Paul himself enjoins Titus (1:5) to ordain **Presbyters** in **every town**."²⁹⁵

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, Christians are told: 'No man takes...honour to himself, but he that is called by God.' Calvin remarks: "Lest restless and turbulent men should presumptuously push themselves forward to teach or **rule**..., it was expressly provided that no one should assume a Public Office in the Church without a call (Hebrews 5:4)."²⁹⁶

'Remember them who **rule** over you!... Follow their faith!... Obey them who **rule** over you, and submit yourselves! For they watch over your persons... Salute all them that have the **rule** over you!'

Calvin comments: "'Obey'!... He is speaking of the Pastors and other **Governors** of the Church.... When he says that 'they watch on behalf of your souls,' he is referring properly to spiritual **rule**.... The Apostle says...that they watch for your souls.... This does not apply to any, except those who are true **Rulers**.... The Papists who use this as a foundation for the tyranny of their idol [the Pope], are doubly foolish.

"The Spirit commands us to receive obediently the teaching of holy and faithful **Bishops**.... He commends us to give them honour.... 'For they **watch**'....

"The **Office** of **Bishop** is such that it includes the greatest labours.... If we want to be thankful, it is scarcely possible to repay what we owe to them....

"Salute!...' He is sending this greeting particularly to the **Rulers**, as a mark of honour."²⁹⁷ And Calvin adds: "The Word of the Lord remains, which commands us to obey those who have the **rule** over us (Hebrews 13:17)."²⁹⁸

In his First Epistle, Peter said to the Christians in Pontus and Galatia and Cappadocia, and Asia and Bythinia: 'I exhort the Elders among you, I who too am an Elder, (to) feed the flock! Not as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock.... Likewise, you younger -- submit yourselves to the Elders!'²⁹⁹

Calvin says: "Peter had received a command from the Lord. So he exhorts all other Presbyters to feed the Church.... Nothing more was given to Peter, than to the others.... Peter, when he reminds Pastors of their duty, exhorts them to feed the flock without lording it over the heritage (First Peter 5:2) -- meaning by 'heritage' the body of believers."³⁰⁰

Calvin comments further: "By this word ['**Elders**'], he means...all those who are appointed for the **Government** of the Church. They called them **Presbyters** or **Elders**, for the sake of honour (*Seniores honoris causa*)....

"**Peter** similarly calls **himself** a '**Presbyter**' [and **not** the first **Pope**].... If he had the right of primacy, he would have claimed it.... The **Pope** makes [his priests] Presbyters for the quite different purpose of daily slaying Christ [in the Romish Mass].... Let us then remember to distinguish the institution of Christ from the confusion of the **Pope**, as light is different from darkness!"³⁰¹

Calvin also adds: "Peter...exhorts **all other Presbyters** to feed the Church (First Peter 5:2). Hence we are entitled to infer that by that expression of Christ, nothing more was given to Peter than to the others.... Peter, when he reminds Pastors of their duty, exhorts them to feed the flock -- without lording it over the heritage!"³⁰²

Unfortunately, Calvin wrote no commentary on the Second and Third Epistles of John -- nor on the Book of Revelation. Yet both of those Epistles start off with the words '**The Elder**' -- and Revelation in fact mentions the words 'Elder(s)' **some twelve times**.³⁰³ Hence, we must reject the Papacy -- and instead follow Peter the Presbyter!

CALVIN'S SUMMARY OF THE ELDERSHIP IN HIS *INSTITUTES*

Putting all this together, in his *Institutes* Calvin well summarizes his teaching on the Eldership. There, he first discusses in Acts 20:20 the statement of Paul:

"I kept back nothing that was profitable to you, but have showed you and have taught you publically -- and from house to house'.... In presiding over the Church, they [**the Elders**] have not an indolent dignity -- but must train the people to true piety....

"Paul and Barnabas appointed **Presbyters** [plural!] over **each** of the churches of Lystra, Antioch and Iconium (Acts 14:23). And Paul himself enjoins Titus (1:5) to ordain **Presbyters** in every town....

"In like manner, he mentions the **Bishops** of the Philippians -- and Archippus the Bishop of the Colossians. And in the Acts (20:28), we have his celebrated address to the **Presbyters** (plural!) of the church (singular!) of Ephesus....

"In giving the name of Bishops, **Presbyters** and Pastors indiscriminately to those who **govern** churches -- I have done it on the authority of Scripture, which uses the words as synonymous.... In the Acts (20:17), the **Elders** of Ephesus whom he is said to have called together -- he (Paul)...designates as **Bishops**....

"In the Epistle to the Romans (12:7f) and the First Epistle to the Corinthians (12:28), he enumerates...**Offices** as...**Governments**.... There are two of perpetual duration -- *viz.* **Government**, and care of the poor.

"By these **Governors**, I understand **Seniors** selected from the people to unite with the **Bishops** in pronouncing censures and exercising discipline. For this is the only meaning which can be given to the passage 'he that **rules** with diligence' (Romans 12:8).

"From the beginning, therefore, each church had its **Senate** composed of...venerable men.... This arrangement was not confined to one age, and therefore we are to regard the **Office** of **Government** as necessary for all ages....

"He (God Himself) is present and also presides in...exercising **judicial equity**. This, Paul also plainly teaches when he enumerates **Offices of rule**...for the edification of the Church (Romans 12:8). In that place..., he is properly speaking of **the Senate** of grave men who were appointed in the Primitive Church to taken charge of **public discipline**. This **Office**...he calls *kuberneseis*, '**Governments**' (First Corinthians 12:28)....

"Lest restless...men should presumptuously push themselves forward to teach or **rule**..., it was expressly provided that no one should assume a **Public Office** in the Church without a call (Hebrews 5:4).... What persons should be elected **Bishops**, is treated at length by Paul in two passages (Titus 1:7 and First Timothy 3:1).... The description of...**Elders**, is entirely similar....

"Should a Minister be chosen by the whole Church, or only by Colleagues and **Elders**?... The words of Paul to Titus [1:5 are], 'For this cause I left you in Crete -- so that you should...ordain **Elders** (plural!) in every city'.... And also to Timothy, 'Lay hands suddenly on no man!' (First Timothy 5:22).

"But they are mistaken if they suppose that Timothy so reigned at Ephesus and Titus in Crete, as to dispose of all things at their own pleasure! They only presided -- by previously giving good and salutary counsels to the people. Not by doing only whatever pleased them....

"Luke relates that Barnabas and Paul ordained Elders throughout the Churches.... He at the same time marks the plan or mode, when he says that it was done by suffrage. The words are

cheirotoneesantes **Presbuterous** kat' ekkleesian (Acts 14:23). They therefore selected two. But the whole body...in elections declared by a show of hands which of the two they wished to have...

"Rightly therefore does Cyprian contend...it [is] as of divine authority that the Priest [or **Presbyter**] be chosen in presence of the people...and be approved as worthy and fit by public judgment and testimony.... Indeed, we see that by the command of the Lord, the practice in electing the Levitical priests was to bring them forward in view of the people -- before consecration....

"The whole jurisdiction of the Church relates to **discipline**.... The Church of God...needs a kind of spiritual **Government**.... This order is mentioned by Paul in the First Epistle to the Corinthians (12:28), under the name of '**Governments**'....

"In like manner, in the Epistle to the Romans (12:8), when he says 'he **rules** with diligence'.... In the Epistle to Timothy also, he mentions two kinds of **Presbyters**. Some who labour in the Word -- and others who do **not**, but **rule** well (First Timothy 5:17)."³⁰⁴

CALVIN ON POST-BIBLICAL DECLINE OF ELDERS TILL THE REFORMATION

Calvin then traces the Post-Biblical decline of the Eldership throughout Pre-Reformational Church History. First, in the Early Church. "**Three** classes of Ministers are set before us in **Scripture**....

"The Early Church distributed all its Ministers into three orders.... From the order of **Presbyters**, part were selected as...**Teachers** while to the remainder was committed the **censure** of manners and **discipline**. To the **Deacons**, belonged the care of the poor."³⁰⁵

Elders were required to supervise hospitals and Sunday Schools, and to review the application of **Discipline** each week and also to **admonish** others whenever necessary. "See what was anciently the true use of ecclesiastical Discipline.... It be not administered at the will of one individual, but by a lawful **Consistory** [or **Session**].... This power...belonged to the **Consistory of Elders**, which was in the Church what a Council is in a city....

"No society -- nay, no house with even a moderate family -- can be kept in a right state without Discipline.... Discipline therefore is a kind of curb.... It is a kind of fatherly rod.... So far was anyone from being exempted from this Discipline, that even Princes submitted to it.... (Yet) the legitimate course to be taken in excommunication...is not for **the Elders** alone to act apart from others, but with the knowledge and approbation of the Church.... All therefore to whom the Office of Teaching was committed, they called '**Presbyters**'....

Later, "in each city, these Presbyters selected one of their number to whom they gave the special title of **Bishop**.... As it belongs to a President in an Assembly to bring matters before them...and execute what is decreed by common consent, a Bishop [at first] held the same Office in a meeting of Presbyters.... Each city therefore had a College of Presbyters.... Each Presbyter...merely to preserve order and peace, was under one Bishop.... They sometimes erred from excessive strictness."³⁰⁶

"The controversy concerning the title of 'Universal Bishop' (or Pope), arose at length in the time of Gregory (the First, 545 to 604 A.D.).... Everyone that calls himself, or desires to be called 'Universal Priest' -- is by his pride a forerunner of Antichrist.... If one Bishop is called 'Universal' -- the whole Church goes to ruin when that 'Universal Bishop' falls....

"John, who in the time of Gregory presided over the church of Constantinople, went so far as to say that he was 'Universal Patriarch'.... At length, Phocas (the 602-10 A.D. Byzantine Emperor)...conceded to (Pope) Boniface III...that Rome should be the head of all the churches.... The existing state of the Papacy...is clearly a hundred times more corrupt than in the days of Gregory!...

"The most absurd thing of all is that even boys scarcely ten years of age are, by the permission of the Pope, made Bishops.... At length the Roman Pontiff, not content with moderate districts, laid hands first on kingdoms and thereafter on Empire.... Hildebrand, who took the name of Gregory VII (1023-85 A.D.) -- an impure and wicked man -- betrayed his sinister intentions.... The Pontiff ceased not either by fraud or by perfidy or by arms to invade the dominions of others."³⁰⁷

Insisted Calvin: "The Roman Pontiff...is Antichrist.... The Pope...prove(s)...to be Antichrist, the head of all the wicked.... You, the 'viceregent of Christ' whom now the very children all know to be very Antichrist...; a fierce tyrant; a real murderer of souls -- in short, the son of perdition.... What is called the popish hierarchy, I execrate as diabolical confusion!"³⁰⁸

But by 1536, Calvin could boast: "Already in many places, the idols and altars of Popery have begun to disappear.... I hope it will not be long before all remaining superstition shall effectually be cleared away. The Lord grant that idolatry may be uprooted entirely, out of the hearts of all!"³⁰⁹

So, then -- no Pope, but only Presbyters! Instead of the tyranny of the Pope, Calvin replaced the Biblical Discipline of the Elders.

CALVIN RESURRECTS ELDERSHIP AT THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

Said Calvin in his *Catechism of the Church of Geneva*: "There should be a certain order of **Government** established in churches.... The method is, for **Elders** to be chosen to preside as **Censors** of manners; to guard watchfully against offences; and exclude from communion all whom they recognize to be unfit for it and who could not be admitted without profaning the Sacrament."³¹⁰

By 1541, Calvin wrote in his *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*: "In the name of Almighty God, we **the Syndics** -- **the Little and Great Council** assembled with our people -- in accordance with our ancient customs [decree that] each [Church and State] estate, attends to the duty of its Office.... The spiritual **government** of the kind which our Lord demonstrated and instituted by His Word should be set out in good order, so that it may be established and observed among us....

"There are four official orders which our Lord instituted for the **government** of His Church -- firstly, Pastors; secondly, Teachers; thirdly, **Elders**...; and fourthly, Deacons.... Pastors [are]... also sometimes calls **Overseers** [or] **Elders**... Their **Office** is...to exercise fraternal **discipline together with the Elders**.... If any difference over doctrine should arise, the Ministers are to meet together to discuss the matter. Then if need be, they shall invite **the Elders** designated by the Seignery [or **Presbytery**] to help in settling the dispute....

"**Elders** who are...those delegated by the Seignery to the Consistory [or Session]," have the "**Office**...to watch over the life of each person -- to admonish in a friendly manner those whom they see to be at fault and leading a disorderly life. And when necessary to report them to the Company (of Pastors) which will be authorized to administer fraternal **discipline** and to do so in association with the Elders....

"At the end of the year after their election by the Council, they [**the Elders**] shall present themselves to the Seignery [or Presbytery] -- so that it may be decided whether they should be retained or replaced."³¹¹ For such Elders were required to supervise hospitals and Sunday Schools, and to review the application of discipline each week and to admonish others whenever necessary.

In Calvin's 1559 *Discipline Ecclesiastique* -- which formed the foundation of the French Presbyterian Church -- **Elders** (*Anciens*) formed the Church's **Senate**. They joined with **discipline** in a Consistory or **Session**, and were elected annually.³¹²

Calvin's successor Rev. Professor Dr. Theodore Beza remarked: "Calvin...proceeded to set it (the Church) in order.... The city [of Geneva] stood greatly in need of a curb.... A regular **Presbytery** with full ecclesiastical authority was established.... Laws for the election of a Presbytery and for the due maintenance of that order were passed -- agreeably to the Word of God and with the consent of the citizens themselves."³¹³

In the 1559 *French Confession* of Calvin and his student de Chandieu, it is stated that "the True Church...should be **governed** according to the order established by our Lord Jesus Christ. That there should be Pastors, **Overseers** and Deacons so that true doctrine may have its course; that **errors** may be **corrected** and **suppressed**; and the poor and all who are in affliction may be helped in their necessities (Matthew 18:17 and Acts 6:3-5 and First Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11 and First Timothy 3:1 and Titus 1:5)....

"No person should undertake to govern the Church upon his own authority.... This should be derived from election (John 15:16 and Acts 1:21f and Romans 10:15 and Titus 1:5-7).... All Pastors, **Overseers** and Deacons should have evidence of being called to their **Office** (Jeremiah 1:4-8 and Galatians 1:15 and First Timothy 3:7-10)."³¹⁴

CALVIN'S STUDENT KNOX AND SCOTTISH AND DUTCH CHURCHES ON ELDERS

Apart from the above de Chandieu, Calvin also had another energetic student and associate from Scotland -- called John Knox. "In 1556 when Knox returned to Geneva as Minister of the English Church there, he found **Ruling Elders** elected annually who assisted in the **Government**

of the Church. This reflected the influence of the *Discipline Ecclesiastique* in which laymen appointed annually had their place in the Church Courts. Returning to Scotland in 1560, Knox...in the *First Book of Discipline* consolidated its Reformed Policy"³¹⁵ or Presbyterian Polity.

The Sixth Head of Knox's 1560 *First Book of Discipline* prohibits the Deacons' distribution of collection money "but by command of the Ministers and **Elders**," and requires the Deacons "to make accounts to the Minister and **Elders** of that which they received."³¹⁶ And the Eighth and Ninth Heads declare:³¹⁷ "Them of the best knowledge in God's Word and cleanest life, men faithful and of honest conversation that be found in the Kirk..., must be chosen **Elders**....

"The **Elders** being elected, must be admonished of their Office -- which is to assist the Minister...in determining and judging causes in giving **admonition** to the licentious liver...within their charge. For by the gravity of the **Seniors** (or Elders), the light and **unbridled life** of the licentious must be **corrected**....

"The **Seniors** ought to take heed to the life, manners, diligence and study of their **Minister**. If he be worthy of admonition, they must **admonish him**; if of correction, they must correct him; and if he be worthy of deposition, they with consent of the Kirk...may depose him....

"If a Minister be light of conversation, by his **Elders**...he ought to be admonished.... If he be found stubborn and disobedient, then may the **Seniors** (or Elders) of the Kirk complain to the Ministry of the two next adjacent Kirks" of **the Presbytery**.

"**The Elders**...with their wives and household should be under the same censure that is prescribed for the Ministers.... Seeing they (the Elders) are **Judges** over others' manners, their own conversation (or behaviour) ought to be irreprehensible.

"They (**the Elders**) must be sober lovers and maintainers of concord and peace.... They ought to be examples of godliness to others. And if the contrary thereof appears -- they **must be admonished...by the Minister**...if the fault be secret.... If the fault be open and known, they must be rebuked before the Ministry" of **the Presbytery**.

"Every year at the least, public examination (is) to be had by the Ministers and **Elders** -- of the knowledge of every person within the Kirk. To wit, that every master and mistress of household come themselves, and their family (so many as be come to maturity), before the Minister and **the Elders** to give confession of their faith. If they understand not, nor can rehearse the Commandments of God's Law -- know not how to pray neither wherein their righteousness stands or consists -- they **ought not to be admitted to the Lord's table**."

The 1578 *Second Book of Discipline* of the Church of Scotland states³¹⁸ that God "has used the **Ministry** of...the **Eldership** for good order and administration of **discipline**.... The word '**Elder**' in the Scriptures...when it is the name of an **Office**," often means "those who are called '**Seniors**' or '**Elders**'.... We call those '**Elders**' whom the Apostles call '**Presidents**' (**Presbyters**) or '**Governors**.' Their Office...is perpetual, and always necessary in the Church of God....

"**Elders** once lawfully called to the **Office** and having gifts of God meet to exercise the same, may not leave it again.... Their **Office** is as well severally as conjointly to watch diligently

upon the flock committed to their charge, both publically and privately (*cf.* Acts 20:17-28) -- that no corruption of religion or manner enter therein.... Pastors and Doctors should be diligent in teaching and sowing the seed of the Word.... **The Elders** should be careful in **seeking the fruit** of the same in the people.

"It appertains to them [**the Elders**], to assist the Pastor in **examination** of them that come to the Lord's table. *Item*, in **visiting the sick** (*cf.* James 5:14*f*). They should **cause the Acts of (the General) Assembly...to be put in execution** carefully (Acts 15:23*f*,30,35 *cf.* 16:4*f*). They should be **diligent in admonishing all men** of their duty (First Peter 5:1*f*)....

"Things that they cannot correct by private admonition, they should **bring to the Assembly of the Eldership** (Deuteronomy 17:6 & 19:12-18 & 21:19*f* & 22:15-19 *cf.* Matthew 18:15-18 and First Timothy 5:17-19). Their principle Office is to **hold Assemblies** (at the meetings of the Session and of the Presbytery and of the General Assembly) with the Pastors and Doctors...for establishing...**good order** and execution of **discipline** (Ezekiel 8:1*f* & 14:1*f* & 20:1*f* & 33:7,31)....

"As for **Elders**, there should be some to be **Censurers** of the manners of the people...in every Congregation." The Deacons were "obliged...to a...count to the...**Eldership**.... The end of this spiritual **Government**...is that God may be glorified, the Kingdom of Jesus Christ advanced..., the Church edified and the bounds thereof enlarged, Christ Jesus and His Kingdom set up, Satan and his kingdom subverted, and God shall dwell in the midst of us to our comfort."

In the Netherlands, there was a whole string of Calvinistic Reformed Church Orders -- such as all those of Wezel (1568), Embden (1671), Dordrecht (1574 and 1578), Middelburg (1581), 's-Gravenhage (1586), and especially that of Dordt (1618*f*) which lasted for about two centuries and which was then revived in 1834 and 1892. Dordt deals with the duties of Elders, the Church Meetings, subscription by Officers like the Elders, and Church Discipline such as censure and attestation.³¹⁹

The Synod of Dordt was not only national in the Netherlands, but included delegates from Britain, France, Germany and Switzerland. It also unanimously approved the Catechism, helped instigate the Dordt Church Order, and was a great blessing in the Netherlands and elsewhere.³²⁰

Its Church Order states that "Scripture has...only **three Offices**.... The **Overseers (Presbyters)**...from the start occupied not a teaching but a Ruling Office.... Already at the time of the Apostles, the Ruling and the Teaching Office were distinguished."³²¹ So the 1578 Synod of Dordrecht denied that Baptism and a marriage may be administered by an Elder.

Regarding "the election of **Elders**..., who may be chosen? Answer: Those who meet the requirements laid down in First Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.... Deposed **Elders**...should not lightly again be placed in **Office**.... The Congregation should decide."³²²

"Article 16 states '**the Office of Elders**' requires 'exercise and taking care of **ecclesiastical disciple**' -- and even over 'the doctrine and walk and official work...of Ministers of the Word.' And Article 23 says: 'It is the task of **Elders** to visit [the homes of the members of the Congregation]...before the Lord's Supper' -- a visit by one or two Elders.

Articles 71 to 81 deal with the exercise of Church Discipline. And all Elders are to sign the Three Formulas of Unity (the *Heidelberg Catechism*, the *Belgic Confession*, and the *Decrees of Dordt*).³²³

ELDERSHIP IN THE CALVINISTIC WESTMINSTER STANDARDS

The seventeenth century *Westminster Standards*, the binding documents of all Presbyterian Churches worldwide today, supply us with further information on the Presbyterian doctrine of the Eldership. Here we are thinking of the 1647 *Westminster Confession of Faith*; the 1648 *Westminster Larger Catechism*; the *Westminster Directory for the Publick Worship of God*; the *Westminster Form of Presbyterial Church Government*; and the 1647 *Act of the General Assembly and the Directory for Family-Worship*.³²⁴

In chapter 20:4 of the *Westminster Confession*, Christians are told to obey the lawful power of their Church Rulers or Elders (*cf.* Hebrews 13:17). On pain of being "proceeded against by the censures of the Church."

In chapter 25:3, we are told that to the "visible Church, Christ hath given the Ministry...of God for the gathering and perfecting of the saints." There in its footnote, the word "**governments**" in First Corinthians 12:28, is quoted by way of proof..

In chapter 25:6, we are told: "There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof, but is that antichrist...that exalteth himself in the Church against Christ."

In chapter 30:1, it is declared that "the Lord Jesus as King and Head of His Church hath therein appointed a **Government** in the hand of Church **Offices**." Here the footnotes supporting this claim, refer *inter alia* to First Timothy 5:17 and Acts 20:17*f* and Hebrews 13:7,17,24 and First Corinthians 12:18 -- all of which describe Church **Government** by **Ruling Elders**.

Chapter 30:2 states: "To **these Officers**, the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven are committed..., with others. By virtue whereof they have power respectively to return and remit sins; to shut that Kingdom against the impenitent both by the Word and Censures; and to open it unto penitent sinners by absolution from Censures."

These "**Church Censures**," says chapter 30:3, necessitate the Elders "preventing the wrath of God...fall(ing) upon the Church." That may occur if the Elders "should suffer (or permit) His covenant and the seals thereof (Baptism and the Lord's Supper) to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders (First Timothy 5:17-20 *etc.*)."

Chapter 30:4 then draws the obvious conclusion about one of the final rôles of all of the Elders. "For the better attaining of these ends, the **Officers** of the Church are to proceed -- by admonition, suspension from the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper for a season, and by excommunication from the Church. According to the nature of the crime and demerit of the person."

Chapter 31:1 states that "to the better **Government** and further edification of the Church, there ought to be such Assemblies as are commonly called **Synods**." Here its footnote refers to "Acts 15:2-6," where Paul and Barnabas -- though themselves Apostles -- determined to consult with other "Apostles and **Elders** about this question" of disputed doctrine, when "the Apostles and Elders came together...to consider...this matter."

Chapter 31:2 says this refers to "a **Synod** of Ministers with other **fit persons** upon **delegation** from their churches" who "meet together in such **Assemblies**." Here its footnote refers to Acts 15:2-4 and 15:22f, showing that those "other fit persons" were "**Elders**."

Too, chapter 31:3 says "it belongeth to **Synods**...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.... Which **decrees** and determinations, if consonant to the Word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission."

The *Westminster Larger Catechism* declares that "Christ executeth the Office of a King, in calling out of the World a people to Himself and giving them **Officers, Laws, and Censures** by which he visibly **governs** them." Here, the footnotes cite "**governments**" or **Elders** in First Corinthians 12:28; and "the Lord is our **Judge**" in Isaiah 33:22.³²⁵

Too, the *Larger Catechism* requires the keeping of "all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath instituted in His Word" such as **Church Government** and **Discipline**." This then footnotes the '**Elder** texts' Matthew 18:15-17 & 16:19, as well as the "**Government** text' First Corinthians 12:28.³²⁶

In the *Westminster Directory for the Publick Worship of God*, we are told that "the Communion or Supper of the Lord is frequently to be celebrated. But how often, may be considered and determined by the...**Church-Governors** of each **Congregation**."³²⁷

In the *Westminster Form of Presbyterial Church Government*, the Westminster Assembly and also the General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland too adopted its *Form of Presbyterial Church-Government*. This document needs to be scutinized closely.:

It declares: "The Officers which Christ hath appointed for the edification of His Church...are...Teachers and other **Church-Governors** and Deacons." The "Church-Governors," of course, means the **Elders**.³²⁸

"As there were in the Jewish Church, **Elders**...in the **government** of the Church (Second Chronicles 19:8-10) -- so Christ Who has instituted...Governors ecclesiastical in the [Christian] Church, hath furnished some...with gifts for **government** and with commission to execute the same when called thereunto, who are to join...in the **government** of the Church (Romans 12:7f and First Corinthians 12:28) -- which **Officers**, Reformed Churches commonly call **Elders**....

"For **Officers** in a single Congregation, there ought to be one at...least...to labour in the Word.... It is also requisite that there should be others to join in **government** (First Timothy 5:17 and Hebrews 13:7 and First Corinthians 12:28)....

"It is lawful and agreeable to the Word of God, that the Church be **governed** by several sorts of Assemblies – which are Congregational (in Sessions), Classical (in Presbyteries) and Synodical (in General Assemblies).... The **Ruling Officers** of a particular Congregation have power authoritatively to call before them any member of the Congregation (Hebrews 13:17).... The **Ruling Officers** of a particular Congregation have power authoritatively to suspend from the Lord's Table....

"The Scripture doth hold out a **Presbytery**.... A Presbytery consisteth of...**Public Officers** as...are...warranted by the Word of God to be **Church-Governors** (Romans 12:8 and First Corinthians 12:28).... The several Congregations in Jerusalem...[were] one Church. **The Elders** of that Church are mentioned as meeting together for acts of **government** (Acts 11:30 & 20:4,6,22 & 21:18)."

Note that the herein cited Romans 12:8 at its footnote ¹, here refers to the Holy Scriptures' **he** that exhorteth' (*ho parakaloon*) -- and **he** that ruleth' (*ho proistamenos*). The later gynecocratic '**she** that exhorts' and '**she** that rules' -- is quite excluded from the Eldership!

"The Scripture doth hold out another sort of assemblies for the **government** of the Church...which we call **Synodical** (Acts 15:2,6,22f).... **Church-Governors**...are members of those Assemblies.... Synodical Assemblies may...be...Provincial, National, and Ecumenical.... It is lawful and agreeable to the Word of God that there be a subordination of Congregational, Classical, Provincial and National Assemblies to the **government** of the Church."

The 1647 *Act of the General Assembly* and the *Directory for Family-Worship*, provide that "the General Assembly...doth appoint...**Ruling Elders** in each Congregation to take special care that these directions be observed.... Presbyteries and Provincial Synods [too] enquire and make trial whether the said directions be duly observed in their bounds....

"To the end that these directions may not be rendered ineffectual and unprofitable...through the...neglect of the very substance of the duty of Family Worship, the Assembly doth further require and appoint...**Ruling Elders** to make diligent search and equity in the Congregations...whether there be among them any family...or families which...neglect this necessary duty.... If any [such] family be found, the head of the family is first to be admonished privately to amend his fault.... In case of his continuing therein, he is to be gravely...reproved by the **Session**.

"After which reproof, if he be found still to neglect Family Worship -- let him be for his obstinancy in such an offence, suspended and debarred from the Lord's Supper as being justly esteemed unworthy to communicate therein till he amend!... Persons of eminency (which includes **all Elders** of the Kirk)...not only ought to stir up themselves and (their) families to diligence herein -- but also to concur...that in all other families where they have power and charge, the said exercises be conscionably performed....

"An offender is to be reclaimed by private **admonition**.... If that be not effectual -- (then) by joining **one or two more** in the admonition according to the **rule** of Christ, (so) that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established!"³³⁰

So then. As Dr. Charles Hodge says in his *Church Polity*, the Presbyterian *Form of Government* states "that the **Congregation** should elect **Ruling Elders**.... The Minister, after (the) sermon, shall state the warrant and nature of the **Office**.... He shall **propose certain questions** first to the Candidate and then to the people.... When these questions are **satisfactorily answered**, 'the Minister shall proceed to set apart the Candidate by prayers to **the Office of Ruling Elder**.'"

What this means, is that the Elders are democratically elected! But they are elected, to function as an aristocracy!! Thus the *demos*, the 'mob' – elects *tous aristous*, the 'best'!!!

ENDNOTES

- 1) *Presbuteros* (the Officer "Elder") -- as in Mt. 15:2 & 28:2 and Acts 11:30 & 14:23.
- 2) *Presbuteros* ("Aged") -- as in I Tim. 5:1f and Heb. 11:1-7 and I Pet. 5:5.
- 3) Cf. F.N. Lee's *The Triune God and the Triune Office*, Kosciusko, Miss., 1977.
- 4) Of course, all three Offices are rooted in all three Persons of the Trinity as a Unit -- on account of Their *perichoreesis* or interpenetration of One Another. Yet the personal properties of Each of the Three Persons would suggest that each of the three permanent Offices of the Church centrally roots in a different Person of the Trinity than do the other two permanent Offices. Cf. Lee's *ibid.*, at its nn. 8-16 and esp. at its n. 8.
- 5) *Idem*, at its nn. 9 & 10. 6) Gen. 50:5; Ex. 3:16f; Jg. 19:16f. 7) Ezra 5:59 & 6:7-14.
- 8) Gen. 50:5; Jg. 19:16f; Ezra 5:59f; Mt. 15:2; Lk. 15:25; Ac. 11:30 & 20:17,28; I Tim. 4:14; Tit. 1:5-7.
- 9) Dan. 7:9,13. 10) Pss. 59:13 & 66:7 & 89:9 & 103:19 and Prov. 8:16 and Dan. 4:17,25f,32.
- 11) Gen. 1:26f & 9:5f. 12) Lk. 3:38; Rom. 5:12f; I Tim. 2:8 to 3:5. 13) Ps. 2; Heb. 2.
- 14) Gen. 5. 15) Gen. 4:16-24. 16) Heb. 11:1-7. 17) I Tim. 3:4. 18) Gen. 11.
- 19) Job. 1:1f & 29:6-10 (cf. Ex. 24:1,9-11) and Gen. 50:7f & 39:21f.
- 20) Nu. 22:4-7 cf. Ex. 18:1,12,17-25. 21) Josh. 9:3,11.
- 22) Nu. 22:7f cf. Ex. 18:1,12-26 and Dt. 17:14f and I Sam. 10:5f.
- 23) Gen. 12:7f; 13:4,18; 14:14; 15:1,10f; 17:9,23f; 18:17f,22f; 20:7f; 11,17; 21:4f,25,33; 22:5-14; 24:1-8..
- 24) Gen. 15:2f & cf. 24:2 (where the LXX has *Presbuteroo*;) & 24:4,48. 25) Gen. 39:4f.

- 26) Gen. 39:21f. 27) Gen. 41:37-41. 28) Gen. 15:13; Acts 7:6; Gal. 3:17.
- 29) Ex. 3:16f, 4:29 & 12:21 all have *Gerousia* in the LXX, from *geroon* (an "old man").
- 30) Ex.12:21-27.
- 31) Ex. 3:16f & 4:29 & 5:10-21 & 12:21 & 17:4-6 & 18:12-21,37 and Dt. 1:13-17.
- 32) Gen. 14:20 & 28:22 and Lev. 27:30,32 and Nu. 18:21,24.
- 33) Cf. Gen. 14:14,20 & 18:14f,32 & 24:2 and Ex. 12:37 & 18:21-25 and Dt. 1:13-16 and Ruth 4:2 and II Pet. 2:5-8 and II Jn. 1f.
- 34) Ex. 18:21 cf. Ac. 1:13-15f & 13:1-5 & 14:23 and I Cor. 16:1f and Rev. chs. 1:12 to 3:22.
- 35) Acts 15:2-6 cf. Heb. 12:22f.
- 36) Dt. 29:1,10f & 31:9f; Ac. 7:27,35,38; Heb. 3:3-6; 8:5f & 12:18-23.
- 37) T.N. Hanekom's *Class Notes in Church History*, Stellenbosch, 1960f.
- 38) Ex. 18:12-26; Dt. 16:18 & 17:8-10 & 19:2-6,9-12,15-18. 39) Ex. 19:7. 40) Ex. 19:1f,7.
- 41) Ex. 24:1,9,11 cf. 12:37f & 18:21f. 42) Ex. 24:14 cf. n. 41 above. 43) Lev. 4:15.
- 44) Lev. 9:1. 45) Nu. 11:16,20,25 cf. Tit. 1:5-14. 46) Acts 7:35,37. 47) Nu. 11:24-27.
- 48) Cf. I Tim. 5:17f. 49) Nu. 11:25-29, cf. nn. 123f below. 50) Dt. 5:22-24.
- 51) Dt. 19:11f,18 cf. Nu. 35 ch. 35 and Josh. 20:2f.
- 52) Dt. 1:13-16 & 16:18 cf. 17:8,13 & 21:1-20 & 22:15-19 & 25:7-9. Cf. too n. 130 below.
- 53) Dt. 27:1f & 29:10f & 31:9f,28f & 32:7f. 54) Cf. nn. 20 & 52 above. 57) Dt. 34:10.
- 58) Ex. 3:16-18 & 4:29 & 12:21, where the LXX has *Gerousia* alias "Session of aged men." In Ex. 24:9, LXX B has *tees Gerousias Israel* -- whereas A reads *toon Presbuteroon Israel*.
- 59) Ex. 3:14f & 4:29 and Nu. 11:16f etc. 60) Ex. 24:9-11. 61) Gen. 15:2 and Ex. 24:1,9-11.
- 62) Gen. 24:2f and Ex. 18:21. 63) Ex. 4:28-31, 5:19-21; 12:21; 18:12,22; 19:7f; and Dt. 32:7.
- 64) Ex. 3:16f and Dt. 27:1. 65) Nu. 11 cf. n. 49 above.
- 66) Cf. F.N. Lee's *The Triune God and the Triune Office*, at its n. 95.
- 67) Cf. Gen. 17:23f & 21:4f and Ex. 12:21f etc.

- 68) Gen. 15:3-9 & 17:10-27 & 21:4 & 50:7; Ex. 12:1,21 & 17:5*f* (*cf.* I Cor. 10:1-4) & 19:7*f* & 24:1*f* and Nu. 11:16-30 and Dt. 5:23 & 23:1:20 & 27:1 & 29:10*f* & 31:9*f*,28*f* & 32:7*f*.
- 69) Num. 27:16*f* and Josh. 7:6 & 8:10,30*f* & 9:11 and Acts 7:38. 70) Josh. 20:1-6.
- 71) Josh. 23:2 & 24:1,31.
- 72) Josh. 24:31; Judg. 2:7 & 8:14*f* & 11:5*f* & 21:16 and Ruth 1:1 & 4:2,4,9,11.
- 73) Judg. 2:7,16-19 & 11:5-11; 21:16. 74) Ruth 1:1 & 4:2,4,9,11.
- 75) Dt. 17:14*f cf.* I Sam. 8:5-19.
- 76) I Sam. 4:3 & 8:4 & 11:3 & 11:3 & 15:30 & 16:4 & 30:26.
- 77) I Sam. 30:26 and I Chr. 11:3 & 15:25 & 21:16 and Ps. 107:32 and Prov. 31:23.
- 78) II Sam. 3:17 & 5:3 & 12:17 & 17:4,15 & 19:11 and Ps. 107:32.
- 79) I Kgs. 8:1-3 and II Chr. 5:2-4. 80) I Kgs. 20:7*f*. 81) I Kgs. 21:8,11.
- 82) II Kgs. 6:32 & 10:1,5. 83) II Kgs. 19:2 *cf.* Isa. 37:1*f* and II Kgs. 23:1 and II Chr. 34:29.
- 84) Joel 1:14 & 2:16. 85) Ezek. 8:1 & 14:1 & 20:1.
- 86) Jer. 26:17 & 29:1 and Lam 1:19 & 2:10 & 4:16 & 5:12-14. 87) Ezra 5:5,9 & 6:7-14.
- 88) Ezra 10:8-14. 89) *Cf.* Ac. 7:38.
- 90) Nu. 27:16-23; Josh. 7:6 & 8:10,30*f* & 9:11 & 20:4 & 23:2 & 24:1,31.
- 91) Judg. 2:7 (*cf.* Josh. 24:31) & 8:14*f* & 11:5*f* & 21:16. 92) Ruth 1:1 & 4:2,4,9,11.
- 93) I Sam. 8:1,4,11*f cf.* Ex. 18:12-21 & Dt. 17:14*f*.
- 94) I Sam. 4:3 & 8:1-5*f* & 11:3 & 15:20 & 16:4*f* & 30:26*f* and II Sam. 3:17*f* & 5:3*f* & 12:16*f* & 17:4*f*,15*f* & 19:11*f* and I Kgs. 8:1-8 & 20:7*f* & 21:8*f* and II Kgs. 10:1*f*,5*f* & 19:2 & 23:1*f* and I Chr. 11:3*f* & 15:25*f* & 21:16 and II Chr. 5:2*f* and Ps. 107:32 & Prov. 31:23 and Isa. 37:1-3*f* and Joel 1:14 & 2:16 and Jer. 2:8 & 3:15 & 26:17*f* and Lam. 1:19 & 2:10 & 4:16 & 5:12-15.
- 95) Josh. 7:6*f cf.* 8:33*f* and I Sam. 4:3*f* and I Chr. 21:16 and Lam. 2:10.
- 96) *Cf.* I Sam. 15:30 and Ps. 107:32 and I Kgs. 8:1-3 and I Chr. 15:25*f* and Joel 1:14 & 2:16.
- 97) I Sam. 30:26*f cf.* Ac. 11:25-30. 98) II Sam. 5:3. 99) II Sam. 12:16*f*.

- 100) II Kgs. 6:32 and Joel 1:14 & 2:16 and Ezek. 20:1f. 101) Lam. 4:16 & 5:12.
- 102) I Sam. 8:1f & 16:4f & 19:11 and I Kgs. 23:13-20f and Ezek. 20:1f.
- 103) II Kgs. 23:1 and II Chr. 34:29f. 104) Jer. 2:8 & 26:17-24.
- 105) I Sam. 8:1f & 16:4f & 19:11 and I Kgs. 34:29f and Jer. 2:8 & 26:17f & 29:1 and Lam. 4:16 & 5:12 and Ezek. 8:1 & 14:1 & 20:1f.
- 106) Cf. n. 60 above, and G. Bornkamm's *Presbus* in Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1968, VI:658f.
- 107) Ezra 10:7-16 & 8:1f and Neh. 7:5f cf. Lk. 7:1-5. 108) Ezra 10:8,14.
- 109) Ezra 5:5,9 & 6:7f,14. 110) Ezra 10:14 and Neh. 3:9,12,14-9 & 4:16 & 7:2 & 11:1.
- 111) *Chooriym*, Neh. 2:16 & 4:14,19 & 5:7 & 6:17 & 7:5 & 13:17 cf. n. 106 above; *S^egaaniym*, Ezra 9:2 and Neh. 2:16 & 4:14,19 & 5:7,17 & 7:5 & 12:30 & 13:11.
- 112) Bornkamm, in Kittel's *op. cit.* IV:659.
- 113) On the size of the Great(er) *Sanhedrin*, see nn. 112 above and 114 & 133 below; Gen. 4:24 & 5:12,31; and the seventy-odd nations listed in Gen. ch. 10 (cf. n. 133 below) & 11:26 & 46:27 and Ex. 1:5 & 24:1 and Nu. 11:16,24f and Dt. 10:22 and Judg. 1:7 & 9:2 & 12:34 and Ezra 8:7,14 and Lk. 10:1,7 and Ac. 7:14.
- 114) Lk. 7:1-6. 115) Mt. 21:23,31. 116) Mt. 24:1-4.
- 117) Mt. 26:47,59 & 27:1 and Mk. 14:43,53 & 15:1 and Lk. 22:52. 118) Mt. 27:3,12,20,41.
- 119) Ac. 4:2f,5,8,21,23.
- 120) Cf. n. 106 above. One needs to distinguish Mt. 5:22's & 26:59's (Greater) Council of 70-72 members, comprising the (inter)national *Sanhedrin* (or General Assembly), from the only 23-member (Lesser) Council(s) or regional *Sanhedrin*(s) or Classes or Presbyteries) in the various cities (cf. Mt. 10:17 & Mk. 13:9).
- 121) E.P. Clowney's *A Brief for Church Governors in Church Government*, in 1977 P.C.A.'s *Handbook* p. 1629. Cf. too n. 135 below.
- 122) Mk. 15:1 cf. 11:27 & 14:53 and Mt. 27:1,41 cf. John 11:47. 123) Lk. 20:1.
- 124) P.C.A.'s *Book of Church Order* 10-4; cf. n. 133f below.
- 125) Thus: Priests, Scribes and Elders (Mt. 26:3 & 27:41 and Mk. 11:27 & 14:43 and Lk. 20:1); Priests, Elders and Scribes (Mk. 14:53 & 15:1); Elders, Priests and Scribes (Mt. 16:21 and Mk. 8:31); and Elders, Scribes and Priests (Ac. 4:5f). Sometimes only the Priests and the

Elders are mentioned, the Scribes being omitted (Mt. 21:23 & 27:1,3,12,20 & 28:11f and Ac. 4:23 & 23:14 & 25:15). Sometimes only the Elders and the Scribes are mentioned, the Priests being omitted (Ac. 6:12). And sometimes only the Elders are mentioned, the Priests and the Scribes either being omitted or otherwise being comprehended under the general term 'Rulers' (Ac. 4:8).

But such shorter expressions are merely *pars pro toto*, and the full 'Joint Session' includes all three Offices (Ac. 4:8 *cf.* vv. 5 & 23). In the latter example, the terms "Elders" (*Presbuteroi*) is therefore just as elastic (embracing all three Offices in the *Sanhedrin*) as the term "Minister" (*Diakonos*) is. *Cf.* F.N. Lee's *The Diaconate*, at its nn. 20 to 30. Note too that the Joint Session of all three kinds of Officers ("Priests" and "Scribes" and "Elders") is called *Presbuteerion* in Lk. 22:66 (*cf.* Ac. 22:5).

126) Ac. 7:38 and Rom. 11:16f and Gal. 3:6-29. 127) Rom. 11:16. 128) Mt. 21:43.

129) Ac. 2:32f & 3:21f. Note how the mission to Israel (Mt. 10:6 & 15:24) is expanded after Christ's resurrection, into a mission to the whole World (Mt. 28:19 and Mk. 16:15f).

130) Ex. 3:16f & 18:12,21f,25f (the Judges were thus appointed from the Elders), and esp. Dt. 17:6 & 19:15-17 with Mt. 18:16f and I Tim. 5:17-19 (esp. v. 19). *Cf.* too Nu. 11:11,16,24f with Lk. 10:1f,17f and Ac. 11:25-30, and *cf.* the LXX's *Gerousia* at Ex. 3:16 & 4:29 & 12:21 with the New Testament's *Gerousia* at Ac. 5:21 (*cf.* our text above at its n. 29), and the New Testament's Christian *Presbuteerion* at I Tim. 4:14. *Cf.* too n. 52 above.

131) Lk. 6:12 & 9:1. The Apostles too were Elders (I Pet. 1:1 & 5:1 and Rev. 4:4 & 21:10-14).

132) Ac. 15:15-17 *cf.* Rev. 21:12-14 and F.N. Lee's *The Triune God and Triune Office*.

133) Lk. 10:1-17 (*cf.* 9:1-9 and Nu. 11:16f). Calvin suggests in his *Harmony of the Gospels* at Lk. 10:1 that these seventy whom our Lord Jesus Christ commissioned as governing Preacher-Evangelists (*cf.* Lk. 9:2f) were to correspond to the seventy whom Moses previously commissioned as governing Prophets (Ex. 24:1 and Num. 11:16-25f), and to the seventy(-two?) Members of the later Greater Sanhedrin -- just as the twelve whom Christ had previously sent out as Apostles were to correspond to the twelve Patriarchs of Israel (*cf.* Rev. 12:14). Note too the following, regarding the Greek of Lk. 10:1:--
(1) AlephCD *etc.*, which give the more-preferred reading (unscientifically and totally ignored by Nestlé and Kirkpatrick!), have *kai* -- yielding the meaning that the Lord Jesus appointed "other seventy too" -- that is, either (and very likely) in addition to a previously-mentioned appointed 'twelve' (Lk. 9:1), or possibly (but much less likely) in addition to a previously-unmentioned but nevertheless previously-appointed 'seventy' different to this 'other seventy' of Lk. 10:1. Whereas the less-preferred readings BLXi omit the *kai*, thus suggesting that Jesus appointed but one group of 'seventy.'
(2) The readings AlephACLWΔΘΞ *etc.*, the more-preferred readings, have 'seventy' -- perhaps anticipating the later evangelization of the 'seventy-nation' heathen world mentioned in Gen. 10. Thus Baljon's *Commentary on Luke*, and the *Expositor's Greek Testament* (*ad loc.* Lk. 10:1f) -- while BD *etc.*, the less-preferred readings, have (with Nestlé and Kirkpatrick) 'seventy-two.' This suggests either Nu. 11's seventy-two (70 plus

- Eldad and Medad) or a new 72-member *Sanhedrin* (thus Calvin above). Cf. too nn. 113 above & 134 below.
- 134) Lk. 10:1f,5f,9f & 9:1-6 -- cf. Ac. 20:19f,28 and I Pet. 5:1-5 and Jas. 5:14f. Cf. too n. 113 above (*q.v.*), and cf. too the P.C.A.'s *Book of Church Order* 9:4 -- which states that "Ruling Elders...should visit the people at their homes, especially the sick." Cf. too n. 133 above.
- 135) Thus E.P. Clowney's *op. cit.* p. 1630 para. 3, where it is stated that "the seven in Acts 6...could have been called *Presbuteroi* in an inclusive sense (cf. n. 125 above), and their administrative duties could readily include the management of a famine offering...(by) the group that began with the seven that Luke calls *Presbuteroi* in Acts 11:30." Cf. too F.N. Lee's *The Diaconate*, at its nn. 271 & 250.
- 136) Ac. 6:8-12. 137) Ac. 11:27,30. 138) Cf. nn. 130 & 133f above.
- 139) The Presbytery of Syria (Ac. 11:22-30 cf. 13:1-3 & 14:26-28). Cf. too the Presbyteries of Galatia (I Cor. 16:1f); of Judaea (Ac. 6 to 9); and of Asia (Rev. 1 to 3); cf. Lk. 7:1-5 and Tit. 1:5 and Dt. 21:20.
- 140) Cf. nn. 134 & 139 above. 141) Ac. 14:23 cf. 13:14,48 to 14:21f.
- 142) Ac. 14:21-26 and 15:1-4,14-23,27-32 & 16:1-5.
- 143) See *Heegoumenoi* in Heb. 13:7,17,24 and Jas. 1:1 & 5:14 (*Presbuteros*) and I Pet. 1:1 & 5:1f (*Presbuteros...Sumpresbuteros*).
- 144) Ac. 20:17f cf. Rev. 1:4,11f to 2:1f & 4:4,10 & 5:5-14 & 7:11-14 & 11:16 & 14:3 & 19:4.
- 145) Ac. 20:28,31. 146) Acts 23:12-14 & 24:1 & 25:15.
- 147) "Elders: are "Bishops" -- cf. Ac. 20:17,28 and Tit. 1:5,9.
- 148) "Elders" are "Shepherds" (or "Pastors"), Nu. 27:16f and I Kgs. 22:16f and Isa. 40:10f cf. Ac. 20:28 and Jer. 2:8 and Ezek. 34:2f and Zech. 10:2f & 11:3-17 and Heb. 13:7,17,20,24 and I Pet. 2:25 & 5:1-4. Cf. too Macpherson's *Presbyterianism* p. 44, and Jer. 26:17f & 29:1f.
- 149) I Tim. 3:1-7.
- 150) Phil. 1:1 and I Th. 5:12 (*kopiontas...kai proïstamenous*) with I Tim. 5:17 (*proestootes*), and cf. n. 151 below.
- 151) I Cor. 12:28, *kuberneeseis* ('governments'). Cf. Macpherson's *op. cit.* p. 46: "The Hebrew, Greek and Latin words -- and their English equivalent 'govern' (*Gabaar, Kubernaoo, Guberno*) -- are all from one stem. The Pilot of the ship was called the 'Governor' -- rendered 'Master' in Acts 28:11, and 'Shipmaster' [in] Rev. 17:17. The fundamental idea here is strength, which is the essential element in an Office of control."

- 152) Rom. 12:8b, *ho proïstamenos* (cf. too 16:1f). 153) Tit. 1:4-13 cf. 2:1-6.
- 154) Ac. 11:30 & 14:23 and Rom. 12:8 and I Cor. 12:28 and Phil. 1:1 and I Th. 5:12f and I Tim. 3:1-7 and 5:17-22 and Tit. 1:5-7.
- 155) I Th. 1:1 & 5:12f cf. I Tim. 1:1f & 5:17 & Rev. 1:1 cf. 7:11f and cf. n. 150 above.
- 156) Ac. 21:18-26 cf. I Pet. 5:1-5 and II John 1f and II John 1f cf. 7:11f and cf. Rom. 16:23 and I Cor. 1:14 and Ac. 18:8. Cf. too n. 131 above.
- 157) I Tim. 4:14 and Rev. 1 to 3 cf. Ac. 15:22 to 16:5.
- 158) III John 1f,9,12 cf. Heb. 13:7,17,24 and I Pet. 5:1-5 and Gal. 2:9-14 and Tit. 1:5-15 and Ac. 20:20,26f,29f. Cf. too nn. 57-59 & 69f & 80f above.
- 159) Viz. esp. Ex. 18:12,20-26 and Acts 20:20-31 and I Th. 5:12f and I Tim. 3:2-7 and Tit. 1:5 to 2:4 and I Pet. 5:1-5.
- 160) Gen. 18:19f,32 and Ex. 18:21 and Ruth 4:2 and Lk. 9:1-4 & 10:1-5 -- and Acts 20:20f and I Tim. 3:2 & 5:19,22 and Tit. 1:6a,7a,9b and II Pet. 5:8.
- 161) I Th. 5:12 and I Pet. 5:1f and Ex. 18:12-16 and Dt. 1:15 and II John 1f cf. too n. 33 above.
- 162) I Tim. 3:2 and Tit. 1:6a.
- 163) Ac. 20:20 (*per contra* II Tim. 3:4-7 and Ex. 18:12,21f cf. P.C.A.'s *Book of Church Order* 9-4, as quoted in n. 1348 above (*q.v.*). Cf. too Macpherson's *op. cit.* pp. 49f; L.R. Eyres's *The Elders of the Church*, Presb. & Ref. Pub. Co., Philadelphia, 1975, p. 61. See too *Episkopee* ('visitation') in Lk. 19:44 and I Pet. 2:12.
- 164) I Tim. 3:2 and Ac. 20:28,31. 165) Heb. 13:17 and Acts 20:28,31 and Ex. 18:12-16.
- 166) I Tim. 3:2. 167) I Tim. 3:2 and Tit. 1:8.
- 168) Ex. 18:12-16 and I Tim. 3:2 and Tit. 1:7,9b,11 (cf. 2:1-4) and II Tim. 2:2 and Heb. 13:7. On the difference between 'preaching' and 'exhorting,' see. esp. Tit. 1:5,7,9 and Rom. 12:7b cf. 12:8a.
- 169) Ex. 18:12-26 and Tit. 1:5,9 and I Tim. 5:17 and II Tim. 2:24f and Ac. 20:20,25-27,29-31 and I Pet. 5:1f. Cf. F.N. Lee's *The Triune God and the Triune Office*, at its nn. 95 & 148.
- 170) Tit. 1:7 cf. I Tim. 3:8. 171) I Tim. 3:3 cf. Tit. 1:7. 172) I Th. 5:13 and I Tim. 5:17.
- 173) I Tim. 3:3 and Tit. 1:7 and I Pet. 5:1f and Ex. 18:13,21.
- 174) I Tim. 3:4f & 5:17a cf. Tit. 1:6b. 175) I Tim. 3:6. 176) I Tim. 3:7. 177) Tit. 1:7a.

- 178) Tit. 1:7b. 179) Tit. 1:8. 180) Mt. 19:17*f* and Rom. 7:7,12,14 & 13:8-10.
- 181) Tit. 1:5,9-14 *cf.* 2:2-8. 182) I Pet. 5:1*f*.
- 183) I Pet. 5:3a *cf.* II Cor. 1:1,24 and I Cor. 4:1*f cf.* n. 158 above.
- 184) Rev. 4:1,4,10*f cf.* 21:12-14. 185) Rev. 4:4 & 4:9-11.
- 186) Rev. 5:5-11,14 & 11:16 & 19:4-6. 187) I Tim. 5:17. 188) I Pet. 5:3b.
- 189) Ex. 18:21,25 and Dt. 1:13-15 and Acts 20:28 and I Cor. 12:28 and I Th. 5:12 and I Tim. 3:4*f* & 5:17a and Tit. 1:7 (*Oikonomon*) and Heb. 13:7,17,24 and I Pet. 5:2 and Rev. 4:4.
- 190) Tit. 1:6 *cf.* Ex. 18:22,25*f* and Ac. 11:29*f* & 15:6,22*f* & 20:17-24.
- 191) Tit. 1:7 *cf.* Ac. 20:28*f*.
- 192) Tit. 1:8 *cf.* Ac. 15:6-29 & 16:4 & 20:18-25,28,31,37*f* and I Tim. 3:1-7 *cf.* 5:1,17-22 and Heb. 13:7,17 and I Pet. 5:2*f*.
- 193) Tit. 1:9 and Rom. 12:8a.and II and III John and Rev. 7:13-17. 194) Heb. 13:17.
- 195) Jas. 1:14,16 & 5:14*f*. 196) I Pet. 5:2*f*. 197) Rev. 4:10*f* & 5:8*f* & 19:4*f*.
- 198) I Pet. 5:1-4. 199) I Pet. 5:5*f cf.* Ac. 2:18-26. 200) III John 1,9-11.
- 201) Clement's *First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians*, chs. 41 to 47, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1969, I:16-18.
- 202) Ignatius's *Epistle to the Ephesians*, shorter version, chs. 2 & 4; his *Epistle to the Magnesians*, longer version, ch. 7; his *Epistle to the Philadelphians*, longer version, chs. 1 & 2.; and his *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans*, longer version, chs. 8*f*.
- 203) Hermas's *Visions*, I:2:4 & III:9:27.
- 204) Irenaeus's *Against Heresies*, III:3:1-3, see too J. Faà di Bruno's *Catholic Belief*, Burnes and Oates, London, 1884, p. 164. For a refutation of Romanism, see *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1969 ed., pp. 460*f*.
- 205) Tertullian's *Five Books in Reply to Marcion*, III:360-66.
- 206) Cyprian's *Epistle* 3, in J. Calvin's *Institutes* IV:3:15.
- 207) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on I Tim. 5:17. 208) Jerome's *Epistle to Titus*, ch. 1.
- 209) Jerome's *Letter 52 to Nepotian*, 7. 210) Jerome's *Letter 69 to Oceanus*, 3.

- 211) Jerome's *Letter 146 to Evangelus*, 1. 212) Jerome's *Against the Pelagians*, I:21.
- 213) J. Calvin *Comm.* on Hebrews 11:1-8.
- 214) J. Calvin *Comm.* on Gen 15:2 and its n. 1, *cf.* 24:2. 215) J. Calvin *Comm.* on Gen. 50:7f.
- 216) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Ex. 3:16-18. 217) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Ex. 4:29-31.
- 218) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Ex. 12:21. 219) Ex.17:5f & 18:12-26.
- 220) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Ex.18:12,15,21. 221) Ex. 19:7 & 24:1,9,11,13f.
- 222) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Ex. 24:1,9,11. 223) Lev. 4:3,14,22f & 9:1,3.
- 224) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Lev. 4:3,5,22. 225) Nu. 11:16,24f,30.
- 226) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Nu. 11:16,24,30. 227) Nu. 16:25 & 22:4 & 22:7.
- 228) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Nu. 16:25, *cf.* Gen. 11:1-9 & 15:2.
- 229) J. Calvin's *Sermons on Deuteronomy* [1583], Banner of Truth, Edinburgh, 1987 rep., pp. 12-17.
- 230) Dt. 1:13-16. 231) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Dt. 1:13-16. 232) Dt. 5:22f.
- 233) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Dt. 5:23. 234) Dt. 16:18 & 17:6 & 19:12,15.
- 235) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Dt. 16:18.
- 236) J. Calvin's *Sermons on Deuteronomy*, pp. 620f & 632f & 694 & 699f. 237) Dt. 21:1-6.
- 238) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Dt. 21:1-6. 239) J. Calvin's *Sermons on Deuteronomy*, pp. 736f.
- 240) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Dt. 21:18-21. 241) Dt. 22:13-18.
- 242) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Dt. 22:13-18. 243) J. Calvin's *Sermons on Deuteronomy*, pp. 785f.
- 244) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Dt. 25:7-9, *cf.* Ruth 4:2-11.
- 245) J. Calvin's *Sermons on Deuteronomy*, pp. 881f. 246) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Dt. 27:1.
- 247) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Dt. 29:10. 248) J. Calvin's *Sermons on Deuteronomy*, pp. 1027.
- 249) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Dt. 31:9,28. 250) J. Calvin's *Sermons on Deuteronomy*, pp. 1078f.
- 251) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Josh. 7:6. 252) Josh. 8:10,33 – & J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Josh. 8:33.

- 253) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Josh. 23:2. 254) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Ps. 107:29-32.
- 255) See at nn. 52 to 84 above. 256) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Joel 1:2.
- 257) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Joel 1:14. 258) Joel 2:15*f*, and J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Joel 2:16.
- 259) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Jer. 26:17*f*. 260) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Jer. 29:1.
- 261) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Lam. 1:17. 262) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Lam. 2:10.
- 263) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Lam. 4:16. 264) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Lam 5:12-14.
- 265) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Ezek. 8:1. 266) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Ezek. 14:1.
- 267) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Ezek. 20:1*f*. 268) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Mt. 15:2 and Mark 7:3-9.
- 269) Mt. 16:21 and Mk. 8:31 and Lk. 9:22. 270) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Mt. 16:21.
- 271) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Mt. 28:15. 272) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Acts 11:30.
- 273) Acts 14:1,4,14,23. 274) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Acts 14:23.
- 275) Acts 15:1-6,22*f*,25,27,29 & 16:4*f*.
- 276) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Acts 15:1-6,22*f*,28 & 16:4.
- 277) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Acts 20:17-28. 278) Jas. 1:1 & 5:14*f*.
- 279) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Jas. 5:14*f*. 280) J. Calvin's *Institutes* IV:19:18.
- 281) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Rom. 12:8.
- 282) J. Calvin's *Institutes* IV:3:6-16 and IV:11:1 and IV:20:4.
- 283) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on I Cor. 12:28.
- 284) J. Calvin's *Institutes* IV:3:6-16 and IV:11:1 and IV:20:4.
- 285) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Phil. 1:1.
- 286) J. Calvin's *Institutes* IV:3:6-16 and IV:11:1 and IV:20:4.
- 287) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on I Th. 5:12-14. 288) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on I Tim. 3:1-5.
- 289) J. Calvin's *Sermon* on I Tim. 3:1-5. 290) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on I Tim. 5:17-19.
- 291) J. Calvin's *Institutes*, II:8:35. 292) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on I Tim. 5:17-22.

- 293) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on I Tim. 5:19. 294) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Tit. 1:5-7.
- 295) J. Calvin's *Institutes* IV:3:6-16 and IV:11:1 and IV:20:4.
- 296) *Idem.* 297) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Heb. 13:17,24. 298) J. Calvin's *Institutes*, IV:9:12.
- 299) I Pet. 1:1 & 5:1-5. 300) J. Calvin's *Institutes*, IV:6:3 and IV:10:7.
- 301) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on I Pet. 5:1f. 302) J. Calvin's *Institutes* IV:6:3 & IV:10:7.
- 303) See at nn. 144 & 184-86 & 197 above.
- 304) J. Calvin's *Institutes* IV:3:6-16 and IV:11:1 and IV:20:4.
- 305) J. Calvin's *Institutes*, IV:11:5f & IV:12:1,7. 306) J. Calvin's *Institutes*, IV:4:1f,11.
- 307) J. Calvin's *Institutes*, IV:7:4 and IV:5:1 and IV:7:16f,23 and IV:11:11,13f.
- 308) J. Calvin's *Tracts and Treatises*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1958, I:219,26, 276 & II:134.
- 309) J. Calvin's *To Francis Daniel*, in Calvin's *Selected Works*, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1983 rep., 4:46.
- 310) J. Calvin's *Catechism of the Church of Geneva*, in his *Tracts and Treatises*, II:94.
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