

## MISCELLANIES AND CONCLUSIONS

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter! Fear God,  
and keep His Commandments! For this is the whole duty  
of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment!"  
– Ecclesiastes 12:13-14.

In this last chapter of this book, we deal with just a few miscellanies, and then draw our conclusions on Biblical Church Government. Having thus far analyzed Church Office as such; having overtured the Fifth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America about this; having investigated the Triune God and Triune Office; having grounded special Church Office in the General Office of all Christians; having then looked successively at the Ministry of the Word, the Office of Deacon, and the Ruling Eldership – we now deal with a few miscellaneous matters, and then draw some conclusions.

We discuss the following. (1) Should the Preacher be the only Elder to rule each church? (2) Ordination of Officers by the laying on of hands. (3) Should Elders (and Preachers) ever be Rotated? (4) Should Elders (and Preachers) ever be Terminated? (5) Sessions, Presbyteries, Synods and General Assemblies. (6) Characteristic Principles of Presbyterian Church Government. (7) The Congregationalistic Rev. Dr. John Owen Re-Presbyterianized. (8) Some advice from the Hodges on Church Government. (9) Overview. (10) Conclusions.

### **SHOULD THE PREACHER BE THE ONLY ELDER TO RULE EACH CHURCH?**

During 1977, I was a bit disturbed to read two publications by a highly esteemed acquaintance of mine, a leading Preacher of American Baptists. Sadly, I was by a few things in those publications reminded of the great Protestant Reformer John Calvin's statements: "We are assailed by two sects which seem to differ most widely from each other. For what similitude is there in appearance between **the Pope**, and **the Anabaptists**? And yet..., when they boast extravagantly of **the Spirit** -- the tendency certainly is to sink and bury **the Word of God!**"<sup>1</sup>

Thereupon, on November 21st 1977, I decided to write the following open letter to this much revered Baptist Pastor. Although he kindly acknowledged yet sadly never refuted my open letter, I thought it best to preserve it for the benefit of others. Here it is, with just a few minimal changes.

Dear brother! Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied -- from one who is "also an Elder." And indeed from one who, much more importantly, is also elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ -- and who has been baptized in the glorious name of our Triune God! First Peter 1:2 and 5:1.

By the mercies of our Sovereign Lord, you are the much esteemed Preacher of a Baptist Church.... Moreover, you are also a nationally acknowledged authority on true or historic Baptist Theology -- as is evident in your September 1977 publication *Extra-Biblical Ecclesiastical Systems*. And your most thought-provoking July 1977 publication (titled *Elders*

*in a New Testament Church*) is undoubtedly the clearest exposition of Baptist Church Government we have yet seen.

Brother, we believe your valuable publications have been of great service to the Christian World! For in them you have we feel correctly pointed out: (a), that all Pastors are Elders and all Elders are Pastors; (b), that the Pastors must have leadership in the Church; (c) that "laymen's" committees-as-such are often incapable of giving efficient church leadership; (d), that church committees of laymen indeed often tend to be dominated by one of their members who acts like a Diotrophes in order to try to get things done (III John 9); (e) that Preachers should be 'honourably' paid for their services to the Church; and (g), that only Preachers should "preach" in the Congregation.

But, dear brother -- very respectfully -- it seems to us you are not correct in your other claims: (i) that only Preachers are Elders or Pastors; (ii), that only Preachers should have the leadership in the Church; (iii), that all Elders are paid professionals and therefore Preachers; (iv), that no distinction can be made between "Ruling Elders" and "Teaching Elders"; (v), that Presbyterian "Ruling Elders" are "laymen"; (vi), that Co-Preachers in the same Congregation are not co-equals; (vii), that the Officer who preaches should rather not be called "the Preacher" but should preferably only be called "the Pastor"; and (viii), that only the Preacher should elect the Committees of the Congregation.

May we now, dear brother, please evaluate these claims of yours one at a time in the light of the infallible Word of God which both of us love and try to obey? For, as you yourself so correctly point out in your publication *Extra-Biblical Ecclesiastical Systems*: "All our doctrine must be derived from the letter of the Scriptures..., and this includes our doctrine of the Church (Ecclesiology). The very idea that human wisdom must create a working system of Church Government..., is disruptive of sound doctrine." Amen, brother; amen!

First, then, brother -- we study your claim that only Preachers are Elders or Pastors. The Old Testament is of course the major part of Holy Scripture, and the real foundation of all Christian teaching. Cf. Romans 3:2 & 15:4 & 16:26; Second Timothy 3:15-17 & 4:2-5; First Peter 1:10 to 2:2f & 4:11; and Second Peter 1:16-21 & 3:16. And the Old Testament clearly reveals that most of the many Pre-Calvary Elders of Israel were not Preachers. Cf. Genesis 24:2 & 50:7 and Exodus 3:15f & 4:29-31 & 12:31f & 17:5f & 18:12,19-26 & 19:7f & 24:1,9-12 and Second Kings 6:32 and Jeremiah 2:8 & 29:1f and Ezekiel 8:1f & 14:1f & 20:1f cf. Matthew 16:21 & 26:3 & 27:41 and Acts 4:5f & 6:12 *etc.*

Moreover, brother, even a closer study of just that minor part of Holy Scripture known as the New Testament -- which you rightly insist should particularly be adhered to -- enables us to see that also most of the Elders in the Christian Church even after Calvary never preached either. For Romans 12:7-8's "he that rules" is clearly not the same as "he who teaches." Furthermore, First Corinthians 12:28's "Governments" are clearly not the same as the "Teachers." And First Timothy 5:17's "Elders that rule well" are clearly not the same as "they who labour in the Word."

Second, brother, we look at your claim that only the Preachers should have the leadership in the Church. Actually, only Jesus Himself should have that kind of monopolistic power. For He alone is our "great Shepherd of the sheep." See Hebrews 13:7,17,20,24 cf. First Peter 3:25

& 5:1-6. However, among mere humans (and even among Christian humans such as godly Baptists and Presbyterians), after the fall and before the final coming again of our great Shepherd -- all human power corrupts, and absolute human power corrupts absolutely.

Not only a strong "layman" but so too a strong Preacher and even a strong (non-preaching) Ruling Elder can become a Diotrophes in the church. So, for this reason too, God impedes the emergence of such Diotropheses in its human government -- by establishing a constitutional system of built-in checks and balances in every Biblically-structured Congregation.

The constitutional system required by the Holy Scriptures themselves, is known as that of plurality of Elders. In Old Testament times, God's ancient people in each place had many Elders. Exodus 3:16 & 4:29 & 12:21 & 18:12 and Deuteronomy 21:20 and Proverbs 31:23. The same is seen in New Testament times, in Acts 4:5-8 & 6:12 & 13:15. And also in the Christian Church, Acts 11:30 & 14:23-27 & 15:2-6 & 20:17,20,28 & 21:17f and Philippians 1:1 *cf.* 4:15f and Titus 1:5 and Hebrew 13:7,17,24 and James 2:2 & 5:14f and First Peter 5:1-5 and Revelation 1:11 & 2:1 & 4:4f,10 & 5:8 & 7:11-13 & 11:16 & 19:4.

For Acts 11:30 & 14:23 and First Thessalonians 1:1 *cf.* 5:12f all teach that one Congregation should have several Elders. Acts 20:17-28 shows that the Church in Ephesus too had several Elders. So too, also the Church in Philippi, in Philippians 1:1.

Third, brother, we examine your claim that all Elders are professionally paid church workers and therefore Preachers. Now it is of course indeed true that all Elders merit 'honour.' Those Elders who rule well, merit 'double honour.' And indeed, this 'double honour' is especially to be given to those Elders who rule well and who are also Preaching Elders (or those who labour in the Word and doctrine).

However, this 'honour' (or *timee*) here in First Timothy 5:17 is hardly the same as a monetary 'honorarium.' For just a few verses later in First Timothy 6:1, the unpaid and therefore pennyless slave was required to give to his slave-owning master the same kind of 'honour' (*cf.* this same Greek word *timee*).

Now we are not of course suggesting that First Timothy 5:17's *timee* or 'honour' precludes the payment of monetary honorariums to those also honoured in a non-monetary way. But if this word *timee* were indeed applying only or even chiefly to monetary honorariums, it is obvious that such would then have to be paid to all of the Elders (as of right).

Then, those honorariums would have to be paid even to those Preaching Elders who are not even employed in Congregations. And further, they would also have to be paid even to those non-preaching "Ruling Elders" who are not even employed in Congregations. Then too, they would also have to be paid out even to those non-preaching "Ruling Elders" who do not labour full-time or "exhaustively" (*kopioontes*) in the Word and doctrine.

Then, pay would be needed also for that vast majority of non-preaching "Ruling Elders" who have professions other than that of the full-time Church-related works of a non-preaching nature. And finally, such monetary honorariums would then also have to be paid even to those non-preaching "Ruling Elders" who do not even rule 'well' (First Timothy 5:17).

"But the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle the ox that treads out the corn.' And, 'the labourer is worthy of his reward.'" First Timothy 5:18.

Now this Scripture certainly applies to those Preaching Elders engaged in full-time preaching work in their Congregations. And it of course further also applies even to those very few non-preaching Elders employed full-time in other kinds of church-related work.

Indeed, it also applies even to those who are not Elders at all. Such people would include whatever Deacons may be employed by the Church in full-time diaconal work. Acts 6:1-8f and First Timothy 3:8-13 & 5:3,7,9,16. And it would include also all female workers employed in full-time church work too. Romans 16:1f; Philippians 4:2f; First Timothy 3:11 & 5:9-11.

No Elders other than those in full-time church work are to be salaried or rewarded monetarily by the Church. Acts 20:17,28,33-35 and First Timothy 5:18. Indeed, it is not even always necessary to give regular church stipends to those congregational Preachers who have no dependents to support and/or who do not need church money for their own support. First Corinthians 9:4-6,12,15 *cf.* 7:7f,39f. For church monies are only to be given to those in real need of church support. First Corinthians 9:7,9f,13f *cf.* First Timothy 5:5,9f,16,18.

Fourth, brother, we consider you claim that no distinction can be made between "Ruling Elders" and "Teaching Elders." By this you apparently mean that there is no distinction at all between the two different kinds of Elders. No distinction between Preaching Elders (or those Elders who preach full-time), and non-preaching Elders (or those Ruling Elders who do not preach at all).

But God's Holy Word clearly distinguishes the former as "Teachers" -- and the work of the latter as "Government." First Corinthians 12:28. For "he that keeps on teaching" is distinct from "he that keeps on ruling." Romans 13:7f. And "the Elders...who labour in the Word and doctrine" are especially distinct from "the Elders that (only) rule well." First Timothy 5:17.

Fifth, brother, we respond to your claim that those Presbyterian Ruling Elders who do not preach, are "laymen." In the sense in which you would regard your own Baptist Deacons.

Now we ourselves regard the word "laymen" as a Romanistic term foreign to the infallible Word of God. As hopefully consistent Protestants, we try to avoid unscriptural words and ideas. And, committed as we Christians of the Reformation are to upholding the Biblical kingship and priesthood of all believers --we particularly dislike the word "laymen" when applied to Ruling Elders *etc.*

Neither do we really relish the somewhat less objectionable word "clergymen" -- on account of the Romanizing or Episcopalianizing meaning usually attached to it. For that meaning is indeed quite different from the idea of "appointment to a heritage" which the word's Greek root *kleeros* bears in the Bible itself. Acts 1:17,26 & 8:21 and First Peter 5:1-3.

However, if we are to use the word "clergymen" at all -- and then, of course, only in the sense of the true meaning of its root *kleeros* as employed in the Holy Scriptures -- we shall then have to say that both non-preaching Ruling Elders and Deacons too are members of the "clergy"

just as much as Preachers are. We would then also have to insist either that our non-preaching Elders as well as our Deacons be called "Reverend" together with their Preacher, or alternatively (and perhaps better still) that the term "Reverend" should rather be dropped from church usage altogether.

Both Ministers of the Word, and non-preaching Governors, are Ruling Elders. Just as all Elders and all Deacons are Special "Clergy" and Official Ministers (or ordained *Diakonoi*) of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As Macpherson has insisted in his standard book:<sup>2</sup> "It is proper to notice that the original employment of the name clerical does not in itself at all imply any notion of a priestly character belonging to the class of persons so distinguished.... The Greek word from which it is derived (*kleeros*), simply means something fixed or determined -- which may according to the application be either 'position' or 'portion' (of the Lord's inheritance)....

"In perfect agreement with this use of the word, is First Peter 5:4. There, Presbyters are exhorted to tend the flock -- 'not lording it over the portions.' This evidently means the particular Congregations over which they preside.... But the sharp distinction of classes as 'lay' and 'clerical' to which the general use of such terms gave currency [in the Mediaeval Church], was yet more intensified as the notion of priestliness as belonging (only) to the 'clergy' became prevalent....

"From what has been said already of the distinction between 'lay' and 'clerical,' it will be understood that we do not favour the continuance of it.... The Elder in the Ancient Church was in the primitive application of the term not a 'layman'....

"Reformed Theologians refuse to call the Ruling Elder a 'layman'... (The *Westminster Assembly* Theologian) George Gillespie speaks of the term 'lay Elder' as a nickname. The distinction (between) 'lay' and 'clerical,' he rejects -- and reminds us that (the Romish Theologian) Bellarmine had supposed it characteristic of Romanists, as distinguished from Protestants. And so it should be!"

Let us note too the statement of the great nineteenth-century Southern Presbyterian Theologian Robert Dabney. He declares:<sup>3</sup> "Ruling...Elders...as well as the Deacons, are in as proper a sense clergy as Preachers are.... If we understand by clergy what the Primitive Church meant by the word, Christ's portion or *kleeros*, a class of servants set apart by divine command by laying on of hands..., then Elders are as much clergy as (are) Preachers!"

Sixth, brother, we weigh your claim that Co-Preachers in the same Congregation are not co-equals. Your yourself insist that in a large church with two Preachers, only one of them should be called 'the Pastor' -- and that the other Preacher should merely be called 'a Pastor.'

But is this not our old acquaintance Diotrephes -- if not Romish hierarchism -- come back to haunt us with a vengeance? For this reason, we ourselves too should insist on calling all the non-preaching Elders in our Congregation 'the Pastors' -- and on calling the Preacher 'a Pastor' or 'the preaching Pastor' or 'the preaching Elder.'

What, brother, do you make of the Apostle Peter, where he calls himself merely 'an Elder' or 'also an Elder' (First Peter 5:1)? How do you, brother, yourself go about following the humble example of the Apostle Paul, who willingly subjected himself to the majority advice of the Elders of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 21:18-26)?

How, dear brother, do you apply the commands of Jesus -- the commands that all of the Officers in His Church should regard one another as co-equals? And the command that they should also regard all of the Special Officers as the co-equals of all of the rest of their fellow Disciples who do not occupy any of the Special Offices in Christ's Church (Matthew 20:20-28 & 23:1-11f)?

Seventh, brother, we give a short reply to your claim that the Officer who preaches should rather not be called "the Preacher." But that he should preferably only be called "the Pastor."

Now certainly, such a Preacher is -- or indeed should be -- a Pastor too! But all the other (non-preaching) Elders of the Congregation are, or should be, also Pastors (and are therefore obliged to shepherd and to visit their sheep)! Yet only that Pastor who preaches, is the Preacher or the Minister of the Word. Luke 1:2 *cf.* First Timothy 5:17.

Eighth, brother, we make an observation or two about your claim that only the Preacher should appoint the committees of the Congregation. What should one make of this?

Is this not another case of monopoly? Could it not be said that "Diotrephes rides again"? Surely, both the Diaconate and even the Session are but permanent committees of the Congregation -- and not temporary committees of "Preacher Diotrephes." Third John 9-10.

For they are both elected by the Congregation itself -- are they not? Acts 6:3-5 teaches us that not the Apostles but the brethren were to look out among themselves for seven men of honest report, needed for **Deacons** -- and that not the Apostles but rather "the whole multitude" of the Disciples then "chose" those Deacons.

Too, Acts 14:23 ( *cf.* Second Corinthians 8:19) implies that the Apostles "ordained" the **Elders** in every church, only after asking all voting members of the whole Congregation to indicate the Candidate of their own particular choice by first visibly raising their hands (*cheirotoneesantes*) -- or by first signing a secret ballot with their hands in a **public election**. As Calvin insisted, even "Ministers of the Ancient Church were initiated to their Office after **election**. This was termed Ordination or...*Cheirotonia*.... *Cheirotonia* properly denotes that mode of election by which suffrages are declared by a show of hands." *Institutes* IV:4:14.

However, brother, we believe you are absolutely Scriptural where you disapprove of this idea: "'Lord, you keep our Preacher humble; we'll keep him poor!'" Indeed, you even call this idea -- an idea sadly championed even by some Congregations -- "a Baptist heresy."

We believe you are again absolutely Scriptural where you insist that Preachers "ought not only to be paid for their services, but ought to be paid well -- as the church can financially afford to do so." And you are further right, where you declare that Preachers "do not need to be made rich, but they should be paid in such a way as to be 'honoured!'" First Timothy 5:17f.

Now then, brother, you are surely quite correct in opposing the above attitude of "Let's humble our Preacher by keeping him poor!" We agree with you that such an attitude is indeed carnal, if not sadistic.

However, seeing that you yourself hardly hold to that "Baptist heresy" (as you yourself call it) -- will you not right now also relinquish your other views about Christ's Church and her government (which other views we believe we have shown from the Holy Scriptures to be in need of re-examination)? Will you not right now also come over all the way, and join with those to whom you already give the "double honour" of First Timothy 5:17, by calling them your "Presbyterian friends"?

May we finally please consider the views of some of the great Protestant Leaders on these topics? We mean those of Luther; Zwingli; Calvin; the *First Book of Discipline* of the 1560 Scottish Reformed Church; the *First Book of Discipline* of the 1574 Presbyterian Church in England; Dr. John Owen, the greatest Congregationalist of all time; the *Manifesto of Independents* at the end of the seventeenth century; and the greatest ever Baptist of all time, Dr. Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

Declared Martin Luther: "The Holy Supper especially must be guarded from unworthy, *i.e.* manifest sinners.... Since whoever may be excommunicated must, first of all, be publically convicted before the Congregation -- there is due also to the Congregation, and that the Congregation of the place, a voice in the matter. For it concerns the souls belonging to the Congregation. And therefore the Congregation should be furnished with Judges. Exodus 18:12,21f and Deuteronomy 17:12-17 & 21:2f,19f.<sup>4</sup>

Declared Ulrich Zwingli: "The title of Presbyter or Elder as used in Scripture, is not rightly understood by those who consider it as applicable only to those who preside in preaching. For it is evident that the term is also sometimes used to designate Elders of another kind -- that is, Senators, Leaders, or Counselors. So we read in Acts 15, where it is said, 'The Apostles and Elders came together to consider this matter.'

"Here we see that the Elders spoken of, are to be considered as Senators or Counselors. It is evident that the *Presbuteroi* mentioned in this place, are not Ministers of the Word.... They were aged, prudent and venerable men who in directing and managing the affairs of the Church were the same thing as the Senators in our cities."<sup>5</sup>

Declared John Calvin: "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. To all who discharge the Ministry of the Word, it gives the name of Bishops....

"But in the Epistle to the Romans (12:7f) and the First Epistle to the Corinthians (12:28), he (Paul) enumerates other Offices -- as powers, gifts of healing, interpretation, government, 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.... From the beginning therefore each church had its Senate composed of pious, grave and venerable men in whom was lodged the power of correcting faults....

"Moreover..., we are to regard the Office of Government as necessary for all ages.... To this end, there were established in the Church from the first, tribunals which might...exercise the Office of the keys.

"This order is mentioned by Paul in the First Epistle to the Corinthians (12:28) under the name of governments.... For he is not addressing magistrates, none of whom were then Christians -- but those who were joined with Pastors in the spiritual government of the Church.

"In the Epistle to Timothy also, he mentions two kinds of Presbyters. Some who labour in the Word, and others who do not perform the Office of preaching, but rule well (First Timothy 5:17). By this latter class, there is no doubt he means those who were appointed to the inspection of manners and the whole use of the keys. For the power of which we speak wholly depends on the keys which Christ bestowed on the Church in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew, where He orders that those who despise private admonition should be sharply rebuked in public. Matthew 18:15-18 *cf.* First Timothy 5:17a,19 and Deuteronomy 19:12-19 & 21:1-6,18-20."<sup>6</sup>

Declared the *First Book of Discipline of the Scottish Reformed Church* in 1560 (four years before the death of Calvin): "The Elders being elected, must be admonished of their Office. Which is to assist the Ministers in all public affairs of the kirk. To wit, in determining and judging causes [and] in giving admonition to the licentious liver in having respect to the manners and conversation of all men within their charge."<sup>7</sup>

The *First Book of Discipline of the Presbyterian Church in England* was published in Geneva in 1574. It formed the basis of the later 1644 *Westminster Assembly's Directory of Church-Government*, which declares:

"As there were in the Jewish Church Elders of the people joined...in the government of the Church -- so Christ, Who hath instituted government and Governors ecclesiastical in the Church, hath furnished some in His Church beside the Ministers of the Word with gifts for government and with commission to execute the same when called thereunto who are to join with the Minister in the government of the Church. Which Officers Reformed churches commonly call Elders."<sup>8</sup>

Declared Rev. Dr. John Owen, the greatest Congregationalist of all time: "Elders (are) not called to teach ordinarily or administer the Sacraments, but to assist and help in the rule and government of the Church.... Whose Office and duty consists in rule and government only.... Where there is but one Elder in a church, there cannot be an Eldership.... As there cannot be a Senate where there is but one Senator, which is contrary unto First Timothy 4:14....

"Practically, where there is but one Elder..., if he rules by himself...it hath an eye of unwarrantable prelacy in it.... But all these inconveniences are prevented by the fixing of many Elders in each church, which may maintain the authority of the Presbyters and free the church from the despotical rule of any Diotrephes."<sup>9</sup>

Last. Even Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the greatest Baptist of all time, tells of the election of Elders to attend to the spiritual affairs of the church in his own Metropolitan Tabernacle.<sup>10</sup>



Dear brother, the Elders in the Sessions of the Congregations of your Presbyterian friends stand ready and eager to receive you as their fellow Elder (First Peter 5:1)! Will you then not right now likewise regard them as your fellow Elders too? Sincerely, Rev. Dr. F.N. Lee.

## **ORDINATION OF OFFICERS BY THE LAYING ON OF HANDS**

When Officers are ordained, should hands be laid upon them? If so, whose hands -- those of all in the local Presbytery; those only of the Ministers within that Presbytery; those of Ministers also of other local denominations; or those of the members of the local Congregation?

It is to be recalled that ordination of Special Officers depends on their prior ordination to the Office of All Believers. That is to say, only some baptized members of the Church may later get ordained as Ministers and Elders and Deacons -- and their baptisms were earlier accompanied by the laying on of the hands of the baptizer. Matthew 19:13-15 & 28:19 and Acts 8:38.

It seems significant too that even all members of the Old Testament Church were circumcised with the laying on of hands, which circumcising baptism has now replaced. Colossians 2:11-12 and Genesis 17:11-12 and Exodus 4:25. Indeed, even before the institution of circumcision, it seems possible if not even likely that God Triune created both Adam and Eve by as it were laying hands on them even before the fall. Genesis 2:7 & 2:21f.

Jacob, when about to bless Ephraim and Manasseh, placed his hands on their heads (Genesis 48:14). So too did Moses, when he ordained Aaron and his sons to the Levitical priesthood (Leviticus 8:22-24 & 10:6-7) and put his "hands upon the Levites" and on the new political leader Joshua (Numbers 8:10f & 27:18-23).

Those further ordained in the General Office of Communicant (Hebrews 5:12 to 6:2), help in the ordination of Special Officers such as Deacons and Elders. For though only the Preachers ordain them with the laying on of their hands, the Communicants priorly elect them. Acts 6:1-7 & 14:23.

Thus in Holy Scripture, the Greek word *kathistanai* (to ground thoroughly or ordain) is used **not only** re the calling and ordination or appointment of Ministers of the Word such as Apostles and Preachers (First Timothy 2:7 and Second Timothy 1:11). It is used also re the ordination or appointment of Elders to their different kind of Office (Exodus 18:21 LXX and Deuteronomy 1:13f LXX and Titus 1:15 *cf.* Acts 14:23), and apparently also for the appointment of Deacons (*cf.* Acts 6:3-6).

It was used even re the appointment of the Old Testament High Priest to his Office (Second Chronicles 11:15 LXX and Hebrews 5:1-4 & 8:3). Similarly, the cognate Greek word *istanai* is used also re the ordination or appointment to any of the Special Offices. John 15:16 and Acts 1:22f and First Timothy 2:7.

Much could be said also of the Patristic doctrine of ordination. There is scant trace of sacerdotalism until Cyprian (251 A.D.). Even thereafter, the decline was only gradual during the next century or two.

Just one reference in Augustine will suffice. He regarded the laying on of hands neither mechanically nor sacerdotally, but simply as "a prayer offered over a man." *Against the Donatists on Baptism*, 3:16.

After the A.D. 354 to 430 Augustine, however, came the priestcraft of the Dark Ages. Yet the Apostolic and Patristic emphases would at length be recovered -- by those later and greater Augustinians Luther and Calvin.

On all this, Calvin says<sup>11</sup> that Paul commanded Timothy regarding Elders: "'Lay hands suddenly on no man' (First Timothy 5:19-22).... Nor are the seven Deacons elected in any other way." When the members of the Congregation had chosen them, 'they were set before the Apostles' who 'laid their hands on them.' Acts 6:6.

"When the Apostles appointed anyone to the Ministry, they used no other ceremony than the laying on of hands.... The Apostles by the laying on of hands intimated they made an offering to God of him whom they admitted to the Ministry.... In this was they consecrated Pastors and Teachers (I Timothy 4:14 and Second Timothy 1:6). In this way they consecrated Deacons (Acts 6:3-6)....

"It was uniformly observed by the Apostles. This careful observance ought to be regarded [as proper] by us.... By such..., the dignity of the Ministry should be commended to the people, and he who is ordained [should be] reminded that he is no longer his own.... It will not prove an empty sign, if it be restored to its genuine origin....

"It was not the whole people but only Pastors who laid hands on Ministers.... It is certain, that in the case of the Deacons, it was done by Paul and Barnabas and some few others (*cf.* too Acts 6:6 & 13:3).... In another place, Paul mentions that he himself...laid hands on Timothy (Second Timothy 1:6)....

"What is said in the First Epistle of the 'laying on of the hands of the Presbytery' (First Timothy 4:14), I do not understand as if Paul were speaking of the college of Elders." For the Greek there has *toon cheiroon tou Presbuterion* (the 'laying on of the hands of the Presbytery') -- and not *toon Presbuteroon* (the 'laying on of the hands of [all] the Presbyters') ....

"The form by which the Ministers of the Ancient Church were initiated to their Office after election..., was termed...*cheirotonia*.... *Cheirotonia* properly denotes that mode of elections...declared by a show of hands.... This was done everywhere without exception....

"[Later,] the ancient right was preserved.... The form used, was the laying on of hands.... Presbyters also, and Deacons, were ordained by the laying on of hands.... Hence ancient writers often say that a Presbyter does not differ in any respect from a Bishop."

In our Subordinate Standard (the *Westminster Confession* 27:4 & 30:1), the ordination of Preachers is counterbalanced by the appointment also of a government of Governors. Such a government by Elders is also to include at least one Preacher. Second Kings 6:32 and Ezekiel 8:1 & 14:1 & 20:1.

The same applies in our *Subordinate Standard* also re the initial appointment or baptismal ordination to the General Ministry in the Office of All Believers. Thus the Lord promises "to give unto all those that are ordained unto life, His Holy Spirit -- to make them willing and able to believe." Indeed, "all those that are justified...have His name put upon them" and are "sealed to the day of redemption...as heirs of everlasting salvation." *Westminster Confession* 7:3 & 12:1 & 28:1f and *Larger Confession* 167, cf. Acts 8:15f & 9:17f & 19:5f and Romans 4:11f and Colossians 2:11f and Hebrews 6:2.

To the *Westminster Standards*, the notions of 'calling' and 'appointment' and 'ordination' are all closely intertwined in respect of all of the various Church Offices. All of this was later cemented into the 1645 *Form of Presbyterian Church Government* agreed upon at the Westminster Assembly. On ordination, it taught, in part, the following"<sup>12</sup>

"Ordination is the act of a Presbytery (First Timothy 4:14).... The **Preaching Presbyters** orderly associated either in cities or neighbouring villages are those to whom the imposition of hands doth appertain, for those Congregations within their bounds respectively (First Timothy 4:14)....

"Every Minister of the Word is to be ordained by imposition of hands...by those **Preaching Presbyters** to whom it doth belong.<sup>o</sup> °First Timothy 5:22: 'Lay hands suddenly on no man'.... Acts 13:3: '[There were in ...Antioch certain Prophets.... As they ministered to the Lord..., the Holy Ghost said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them!"]... When...they [the "certain **Prophets**"]...laid their hands on them, they sent them away'....

"He that is to be ordained Minister, must be duly qualified.... He is to be examined and approved by those by whom he is to be ordained.<sup>r</sup> °First Timothy 3:10: 'And let these also first be proved'.... °First Timothy 5:22: 'Lay hands suddenly on no man'....

"Ordination is the act of a Presbytery.<sup>t</sup> °First Timothy 4:14: 'Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery'.... In Scripture..., many Congregations were under one Presbytery, and this Presbytery did ordain....

"Preaching Presbyters orderly associated either in cities or neighbouring villages, are those to whom the imposition of hands doth appertain for those Congregations within their bounds respectively.<sup>f</sup> °First Timothy 4:14: 'That gift...in thee...was given thee...with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery'....

"In extraordinary cases something extraordinary may be done until a settled order may be had, yet keeping as near as possibly may be to the rule.<sup>g</sup> °Second Chronicles 29:34: 'The Priests were too few.... Wherefore their brethren the Levites did help them, till the work was ended.'....

"The Presbytery or some of the Ministers of the Word appointed by them...shall come to the place. Or at least three or four Ministers of the Word shall be sent thither from the Presbytery.... The Presbytery or the Ministers sent from them for ordination shall solemnly set him apart to the Office and work of the Ministry, by laying their hands on him.... Here let them impose hands on his head....

"If a Minister be design[at]ed to a Congregation who hath been formerly ordained Presbyter according to the form of ordination which hath been in the Church of England, which we hold for substance to be valid and not to be disclaimed by any who have received it -- then, there being a cautious proceeding in matters of examination, let him be admitted without any new ordination.....

"Records (are to) be carefully kept in the several Presbyteries of the names of the persons ordained, with their testimonials." These are to include "the time and place of their ordination, of the Presbyters who did impose hands upon them, and the charge to which...appointed....

"In the present exigencies (the Civil War of 1645)..., we cannot have any Presbyteries formed up to their whole power.... Many Ministers are to be ordained for the service of the armies and navy, and to many Congregations -- where there is no Minister at all...by reason of the publick troubles....

"It is requisite that Ministers be ordained for them, by some who being set apart themselves for the work of the Ministry have power to join in the setting apart [of] others who are found fit and worthy. In those cases, until by God's blessing the aforesaid difficulties may be in some good measure removed, let some godly Ministers...be design(at)ed by publick authority who, being associated, may ordain Ministers..., keeping as near to the ordinary rules forementioned as possibly they may."

States Hodge in his *Church Polity*:<sup>13</sup> "In the *Westminster Directory*, it is said "The Presbytery or the Ministers sent by them for ordination, shall solemnly set him apart to the Office and work of the Ministry by laying their hands on him'.... The *Directory* repeatedly asserts that the imposition of hands in ordination belongs to the **Preaching Presbyters** orderly associated.'....

"The question was overtured to the [U.S. Presbyterian General] Assembly of 1842, whether Ruling Elders had under our constitution the right to join in the imposition of hands in the ordination of Ministers. And was decided by a unanimous vote in the negative....

"The interpretation which makes the expression 'the hands of the Presbytery' [in First Timothy 4:14] include Ruling Elders, is inconsistent.... In the *Westminster Directory* whence our formularies were derived, this language is admitted to mean the hands of the **Preaching Presbyters**.... The *Directory* elsewhere teaches that the work of ordination belongs to Ministers....

"No man...can doubt that the expression 'laying on of the hands of the Presbytery' was intended to mean the hands of the Ministers.... While Presbyterians have ever contended for presbyterial ordination..., no case...of an ordination in which Ruling Elders participated has been produced or...can be produced in the history of any Presbyterian Church."

As Calvin stated:<sup>14</sup> "What is said in the First Epistle of the 'laying on of the hands of the Presbytery' (First Timothy 4:14), I do not understand as if Paul were speaking of the college of Elders." For the Greek there, has *toon cheiroom tou Presbuterion* ('of the hands of the **Presbytery**') – and not *toon Presbuteroon* (or 'of the hands of the Elders')."

It is sometimes wrongly claimed that according to *The Form of Presbyterian Church Government* – "only for the Ministry of the Word is one actually ordained, although other Officers are set apart." Thus Rev. Donald A. Dunkerley.<sup>15</sup>

However, the *Form* actually teaches: "Ordination is the solemn setting apart of a person to some publick Church Office." And footnote <sup>n</sup> here refers *inter alia* to Numbers 8:19 where Israel 'shall put their hands upon the Levites' -- and to Acts 6:3 which refers to the ordination of Deacons. Indeed, the very next footnote <sup>o</sup> refers to the ordination of 'Elders' at Acts 14:23.

Numbers 8:10-22 and Acts 6:3-6 here also likens the Old Testament Levitical Priesthood to the New Testament Diaconate. This illustrates the continuity between the Old Testament bud and the New Testament blossom of the doctrine of ordination, through its progressive unfolding. Consequently, it is irresponsible to exnihilate a New Testament doctrine of ordination in a vacuum -- without first grounding it in the solid soil of the Old Testament.

With the rise of various denominations especially after the Protestant Reformation, the question has also been raised whether Officials of other denominations too should or should not be invited to participate in the laying on of hands at the ordination of Officers in a denomination other than their own. We now examine this.

The following proposed resolution was read at the January 13th 1979 Stated Meeting of the Gulf Coast Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America. "That we reaffirm and continue the historic Presbyterian belief and practice that all Ministers of Evangelical Churches are Ministers of the Universal Church, and that all Ministers of the Universal Church may participate in the laying on of hands at the ordination of Ministers."

But then it was "moved, seconded and carried -- that the Moderator appoint a Study Group to study the proposed resolution, and report back to the May Stated Meeting."<sup>15</sup> Here is the Report of that Study Group.

"1. We reaffirm and continue the historic Presbyterian belief and practice that all Preachers of Non-Presbyterian Evangelical Churches should be regarded as validly (though perhaps irregularly) ordained Preachers of the Universal Church, so that even (Non-Presbyterian) evangelical ordination not be disclaimed if and when such Preachers (who desire to become Presbyterian Ministers, after careful re-examination by a confessionally-loyal Presbyterian Presbytery), join to take part in the Scripturally-constituted and regular ministry of the Presbytery.

"2. We reaffirm and continue the historic Presbyterian belief and practice that only Preachers of the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches should be regarded as regularly ordained -- namely "by laying on of the hands of the Presbytery" or the representative body of regional Elders (First Timothy 4:14). For 'ordination is the act of a Presbytery' (*Westminster Assembly's Form of Presbyterian Church Government*). And Preachers "are to be inducted by the ordination of a Court...with prayer and the laying on of hands of the Presbytery."<sup>16</sup>

"3. We reaffirm and continue the historic Presbyterian belief and practice that ordination is an act of Presbytery, so that only those Preachers in good standing belonging to that particular regional Presbytery have an automatic right to participate in the imposition of hands at the

ordination of new Preachers in that Presbytery. For the new Preachers are ordained precisely to take part in the Ministry of that particular Presbytery -- and to take part in that Ministry together with the other Preachers belonging to that same Presbytery.

"4. We reaffirm and continue the historic Presbyterian belief and practice that all other (Non-Presbytery) Preachers present at a regional Presbytery Ordination Service, should be invited to participate in the laying on of hands there -- only if specifically approved to do so by the Presbytery as a whole. Approval solely by the Moderator of the Presbytery, is insufficient.

"5. We reaffirm and continue the historic Presbyterian belief and practice that whenever any Preachers or Ruling Elders outside of the Presbytery be approved and invited by the Presbytery to participate in a Presbytery Ordination Service, it clearly needs to be understood that this is to be construed only as a gesture of Christian fellowship and not as a right to which those thus invited are *ex officio* entitled. Such participation can never, of course, either validate nor invalidate the regular ordination procedure of the Presbytery concerned. But especially in view of the widespread inclusivistic ministerial ordination doctrine and practice of the Ecumenical Movement and of liberal churchmen, it is strongly recommend that such approvals and invitations be very sparingly used.

"6. We reaffirm and continue the historic Presbyterian belief and practice of guarding against the undermining of presbyterial control of Ordination Services. When Non-Presbytery Presbyterian Preachers of our own or of other conservative denominations are approved by Presbytery for participation in ministerial ordination, this should specifically be announced to those present.

"7. We reaffirm and continue the historic Presbyterian belief and practice that especially when Non-Presbyterian Ministers are approved and invited to participate, this can easily blur our Presbyterian distinctions and even promote doctrinal deviation. The participation of independent Nonconformists, not to speak of Evangelical Dispensationalists or divisive Submersionists, can easily confuse our people as to the importance of maintaining the whole counsel of God stated in our Presbyterian Confession or the correct understanding of Scriptural Church Government.

"8. We reaffirm and continue our historic Presbyterian belief and practice. We recommend Presbytery exercise the greatest care before approving and inviting Non-Presbytery and especially Non-Presbyterian Preachers to participate in Presbyterian Ordination Services. We should not unwittingly become a tool of the Ecumenical Movement and its Worldly Council of Churches with its inclusivistic ordination doctrine and practice. We recommend that Presbytery exercise the greatest care, before approving and inviting Non-Presbytery and especially Non-Presbyterian Preachers to participate in such Presbyterian Ordination Services.

"The Committee wishes to make its member Dr. F.N. Lee's Position Paper on Presbyterian Ordination available to the Presbytery. This served as background material used by the Committee in formulating its recommendations.

"While not part of its mandate from Presbytery, the Committee further recommends that the whole Presbytery (rather than a Commission) ordain the Candidate for ordination. And that this be done immediately after sustaining his examination, and prior to his later installation.

"Teaching Elder Dick Adelman, Valparaiso  
Ruling Elder Jesse Bealor, Panama City  
Teaching Elder Francis Nigel Lee, Tallahassee  
Ruling Elder Tommy White, Havana

Panama City, May 5, 1979."

In Biblical times, it seems that appointment to any kind of Church Office was usually accompanied by the laying on of hands. The lack of such an imposition of hands, however, never invalidates the appointment.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, the act of the laying on of hands at Circumcision (generally of infants) in Old Testament times -- and the act of the laying on of hands at Baptism (generally of infants) under the New Covenant -- were (unnecessary yet suitable) acts merely confirming the prior appointment of the Candidate to initial membership in the Church of God.<sup>18</sup> For the appointment as such (to that General Office of the Prophethood and Priesthood and Kingship of all Believers) was effected not by the imposition of hands but by means of the grace of the Holy Spirit which was deemed to precede and accompany that initiatory Sacrament itself.

There is some evidence that post-circumcisional admission to the Old Testament Passover (as the Pre-Calvary Sacrament of mature age) -- like the later and post-baptismal admission to the New Testament Supper (as the Post-Calvary Sacrament of mature age) -- was confirmed also by the laying on of hands.<sup>19</sup> Throughout Biblical times, however, the task of administering the Sacraments seems to have been reserved for and rightly executed only by ordained Prophets or Ministers.<sup>20</sup>

The great Presbyterian Theologian Rev. Professor John Calvin reflected on this, in his *Commentary* on Leviticus 4:3-22*f*. There we read about the 'Holy Meal Offerings' brought by the Israelites to God only through the work of ordained Officers of the Old Testament Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Here Calvin remarked that "the high priest...bore the high distinction of the holy unction.... This in some measure related to all the Levites, inasmuch as they were chosen to be of the sacred class; and it now extends to all the Ministers and Pastors of the Church.... It was not lawful that more mediators should be appointed.... To all Sacraments, at any rate to the common Sacraments of the Church, a spiritual promise is annexed.... As now in Baptism..., so under the Law."

Now the various kinds of Church Officers, whether in Old or in New Testament times, generally had their prior appointments confirmed by the laying on of hands of Ministers of the Word.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, commenting on Acts 9:10-19, Calvin insists that Ananias -- who laid hands upon and baptized Paul -- was the 'Pastor and Teacher' at Damascus.

On Acts 21:7*f*, Calvin comments that Philip who had previously been appointed a Deacon (in Acts 6:1-7), was subsequently 'promoted' (*cf.* First Timothy 3:13) and re-commissioned as an itinerating Minister of the Word and Sacraments (alias a travelling Evangelist). That would have happened before he started to preach and baptize people in Acts 8:5-40.

Again, in First Timothy 5:17-22, Paul declares: 'Let the Elders who rule well be counted worthy..., especially they who labour in the Word and doctrine.... Lay hands on no man suddenly!'

Here Calvin comments: "There are two kinds of Presbyters.... They were not all ordained to teach.... There were some who ruled well and honourably, but did not hold a Teaching Office.... The laying on of hands, means ordination."

In the times of the New Covenant, the laying on of hands at one's Baptism; and again at one's first admission to the Holy Supper; and again at one's subsequent possible appointment as a Deacon or as a Ruling Elder (as distinct from the different Office of Minister of the Word and Sacraments) only set one aside to that particular Office to which one was right then being appointed. It did not at all then empower one also to preach the Word, nor to administer the Sacraments. The latter two functions resorted under the calling only of those ordained as Ministers of the Word and Sacraments.<sup>22</sup>

These latter functions were not those of the Deacon, nor of the Ruling Elder. It is of course essential that all Christians should indeed evangelize, alias gossip the Gospel. Psalm 66:16. Cf. too Acts 8:1-4, where -- in some of the better modern English Bible versions, *euangelizomenoi* is not mistranslated 'preaching' but is instead rightly rendered disseminating 'the happy tidings' [Berkeley]; 'announcing the glad tidings' [Darby]; 'proclaiming the Good News' [TCNT]; or 'spreading the Gospel' [Weymouth].

Thus too the great Evangelist Rev. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, in his famous book *Preachers and Preaching*. For *euangelizesthai*, alias mandatory 'evangelizing' properly engaged in by every mature member of the Church, is very different to *keerussein* alias the official 'preaching' of the Word accompanied by administering the Sacraments which is to be done only by called and trained and ordained Preachers.

Indeed, an appointment as Deacon or Ruling Elder neither required nor permitted the appointee to preach the Word -- nor to administer the Sacraments. Cf. too all of the Bible passages referred to by the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (at its 27:4 & 28:2 & 29:3), and by the *Westminster Larger Catechism* (at its QQ. & AA. 156-58 & 169 & 176).

It should also be noted the Presbyterian Church of Australia's ordination vow requires subscription to the above-mentioned *Westminster Confession*. And that the above-mentioned *Westminster Larger Catechism* too is specifically referred to in its *Rules and Regulations*.<sup>23</sup>

Now even non-preaching and non-baptizing Deacons were initially appointed to their own Special Office (of administering help to the needy) -- specifically by the laying on of hands. Acts 6:3-6. This surely suggests that the same was also the case in respect of the appointment even of the non-preaching and non-baptizing Ruling Elders -- to their own different Special Office of government.

For Paul declares: 'Let the Elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour.... Against an Elder, receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.... Lay hands suddenly on no man!' First Timothy 5:17a-22.



It is quite certain that this same impository rite of 'manumission' by the laying on of hands was regularly used to ordain Teaching Elders (*cf.* First Timothy 5:17b) alias 'Ministers of the Word and Sacraments' to their distinct and yet different Special Office of Pastor-and-Teacher.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the laying on of hands was used to commission or set Ministers apart as full-time Foreign Missionaries. Acts 13:1-5*f.*

In the later Church, the Ancillary Office of Deaconess arose.<sup>25</sup> By 350*f* A.D., even those Deaconesses were being appointed to their particular Office -- by the laying on of hands.

At that time, the so-called *Apostolic Constitutions*<sup>26</sup> had the "Apostle" Bartholomew declare, "Concerning a Deaconess, I Bartholomew make this Constitution: 'O Bishop, thou shalt lay thy hands upon her, in the presence of the Presbytery and of the Deacons and Deaconesses, and shalt say:

"O Eternal God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Creator of man and of woman, Who didst replenish with Thy Spirit Miriam and Deborah and Anna and Huldah; Who didst not disdain that Thy only-begotten Son should be born of a woman; Who also in the tabernacle of the testimony and in the temple, didst ordain women to be keepers of Thy holy gates -- do Thou now also look down upon this Thy servant who is to be appointed to the Office of a Deaconess, and grant her Thy Holy Spirit and 'cleanse her from all filthiness of flesh and spirit' that she may worthily discharge the work which is committed to her to Thy glory and the praise of Thy Christ with Whom glory and adoration be to Thee and the Holy Spirit for ever. Amen."

The parameters of this Office of Deaconess are also clearly spelled out elsewhere in the same document:<sup>27</sup> "Let also the Deaconess be honoured by you in the place of the Holy Ghost -- but do not say anything without the Deacon!... Let not any woman address herself to the Deacon or Bishop, without the Deaconess!...

"Let the [male] Porters stand at the entries of the men, and...let the Deaconesses also stand at those of the women [*cf.* Ex. 38:8]!.... Ordain also a Deaconess who is faithful and holy, for the ministrations towards women [*cf.* First Timothy 3:11 & 5:9*f* and Titus 2:3-5]! For sometimes he [the Bishop] cannot send a Deacon, who is a man, to the women.... Therefore, send a woman, a Deaconess, for many necessities."

The great 1536*f* Presbyterian Theologian John Calvin himself is by no means unfavourable toward the appointment of such Deaconesses.<sup>28</sup> However, he is indeed more concerned about the different Ministry of the Word and Sacrament. For it is for the perpetuity especially of the Teaching Office -- whether Levi-tical (*cf.* Deuteronomy 33:8-10) or whether Melchizedek-ical (*cf.* Genesis 14:18-20) -- that Calvin chiefly contended. *Cf.* Psalm 110:1-4, *cf.* Hebrews 5:1-10*f* & 6:20 & 7:1-22*f.*

Thus, on Hebrews 5:4*f*, Calvin rightly commented:<sup>29</sup> "Christ and Aaron have this in common, that each was called by God.... Aaron and the rest of his successors...had as much right as was given them by God.... It is yet legitimate to draw from it this general principle, that no form of government is to be drawn up in the Church by human judgment -- but that men must wait for the command of God.... We must follow the established procedure of election [to the Church Office,] so that no one forces himself in of his own desire....

"The Apostle is speaking here not only of persons, but also of the Office.... No one should grasp this honour for himself as an individual.... Public authority (or authorization) should come first....

"It was unlawful for kings [*cf.* the 'kingly' Governors alias Ruling Elders] to exercise the priesthood [*cf.* the 'Levite-like' Preachers alias Teaching Elders]. It was to this crime of meddling in an Office that was not his, that Uzziah provoked the wrath of God and was smitten with leprosy (Second Chronicles 26:18)."

Yet, awesome as the Teaching Office is (James 3:1) -- suitably gifted Christians should indeed aspire to become Teachers. Hear Hebrews 5:12-14 rebuke those Christians who have never even tried to grow under the teaching of their Minister of the Word: 'Ye ought to be Teachers!'

Here, Calvin remarks: "The true purpose of teaching, is to fit us together -- so that we grow up to a perfect man.... Anyone who ought to grow with time, is inexcusable if he remains for ever a child.... 'Solid food [*cf.* the Lord's Supper], is for full-grown men,' *etc.* He calls adults 'full-grown' -- setting them in opposition to babes."

Calvin then smoothly goes on to urge Ministers of the Word and Sacraments to supervise the admission of infantly-baptized covenant children and other catechized persons to the Lord's Supper at puberty [or later]. He also mentions the imposition of ministerial hands (whether at the prior baptism or at the later confirmation as adult members). For Hebrews 6:1-2 next declares: 'Leaving [or marching on from] the principles [or "first steps"] of the doctrine..., let us go on!... Not laying again the foundation...of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands!'

Here Calvin comments: "He calls adults 'full-grown' [Hebrews 5:14] -- setting them in opposition to babes, as in First Corinthians 2:6 [& 3:1-2 & 13:11] & 14:20 and Ephesians 4:13.... The children of believers were baptized as infants, since they were adopted from the womb and belonged to the body of the Church by right of the promise. Then, after their infancy was over, and they had been instructed in the faith -- they too offered themselves for a catechumenate.... This single passage is abundant evidence that the origin of this rite came from the Apostles."

Calvin is here referring to the Hebrews 6:2 rite of 'laying on of hands' -- at the confirmation of covenant children, alias their admission to the Lord's Supper (*cf.* Hebrews 5:12f). "Afterwards," Calvin explains with regret, this apostolic 'laying on of hands' got corrupted, and "was turned into a superstition" in the Middle Ages.

"They [the Mediaevalists] have invented the fiction that it [Baptism] is a Sacrament by which the Spirit of regeneration is conferred. By this invention, they have mutilated Baptism. What was proper to the latter, they have transferred to the imposition of hands" -- namely during Baptism, and/or at teen-age 'Confirmation' *etc.*

However, continues Calvin, "we should know that it [confirmation] was instituted by its first authors [the Apostles] to be a solemn ceremony of prayer, as indeed Augustine declares.

They [the Apostles] intended by this sign to confirm the profession of faith which adolescents make, when they pass from their childhood.... Today, we must retain the institution [at teen-age confirmation] in its purity -- but we must correct the superstition!"

In his *Institutes*, the great Protestant Reformer Calvin shed yet more light on this teen-age confirmation by the Minister of the Word and Sacraments. Writing about 'Confirmation,' Calvin explained (emphases mine):<sup>30</sup>

"It was anciently customary for the [infantly-baptized] children of Christians, after they had grown up, to appear before the Bishop [alias the Minister of the Word and Sacraments] to fulfil that duty which was required [even] of such [full-grown] adults as presented themselves for Baptism. These [Christian adolescents] sat among the [adult] catechumens, until they were duly instructed in 'the mysteries of the faith' [alias the meaning of the Sacraments, cf. First Corinthians 4:1f], and could make a confession of it before Bishop and people.

"The [Christian] infants, therefore, who had been initiated by [infant] Baptism -- not having then given a confession of faith to the Church -- were again, toward the end of their boyhood or on adolescence, brought forward by their parents and were examined by the Bishop in terms of the Catechism which was then in common use. In order that this act, which otherwise [was] justly required to be grave and holy, might have more reverence and dignity -- the ceremony of laying on of hands was also used.... This laying on of hands, which is done simply by way of benediction, I commend -- and would like to see restored to its pure use in the present day."

It is of course true that, after the time of the Apostles, "a later age...almost obliterated the reality" of this 'laying on of hands' -- and introduced a kind of fictitious 'confirmation' as a divine Sacrament." Yet even "Augustine"<sup>31</sup> distinctly affirms that it is nothing but prayer.... 'What,' he asks, 'is the laying on of hands -- but prayer over the man?'....

Calvin went on: "I wish we could retain the custom which...existed in the Early Church.... A boy...would present himself to the Church to make profession of faith.... He would be taught.... Were this discipline in force in the present day -- it would undoubtedly whet the sluggishness of certain parents who carelessly neglect the instruction of their children."

Calvin also dealt with the laying on of hands at appointments to the Special Offices of the Church in general. And at the ordinations of Pastors alias Minister of the Word and Sacraments in particular.

Said the great Reformer (emphases mine):<sup>32</sup> "It is certain that when the Apostles appointed any one to the Ministry, they used no other ceremony than the laying on of hands. This form was derived...from the custom of the Jews who by the laying on of hands...presented to God whatever they wished to be blessed....

"Thus Jacob, when about to bless Ephraim and Manasseh, placed his hands upon their heads (Genesis 48:14). The same thing was done by our Lord [Jesus], when He prayed over the little children (Matthew 19:15). With the same intent...the Jews, according to the injunction of the Law, laid hands upon their sacrifices.

"Therefore the Apostles, by the laying on of hands, intimated that they made an offering to God -- of him whom they admitted to the Ministry. Though they also did the same thing over those on whom they conferred the visible gifts of the Spirit (Acts 8:17 & 19:6)... In this way, they consecrated Pastors-and-Teachers. In this way, they consecrated Deacons (Acts 6:3-6)... It was uniformly observed by the Apostles."

Continued Calvin: "This careful observance ought to be regarded by us in the light of a precept.... It is certainly useful that by such a symbol the dignity of the Ministry should be commended to the people -- and he who is ordained, reminded that he is no longer his own but is bound in service to God and the Church....

"It is to [be] observed that it was not the whole people but only Pastors who laid hands on Ministers -- though it is uncertain whether or not several [rather than just one or two] always laid their hands. It is certain that in the case of the Deacons it was done by Paul and Barnabas and some few others." Acts 4:36f & 6:6 & 13:1-5f & 14:14-23.

Calvin concluded: "In another place, Paul mentions that he himself...laid hands on Timothy. 'Therefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee by the putting on of my hands' (Second Timothy 1:6).... What is said in the First Epistle [First Timothy 1:18 & 4:14] of 'the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery'..., I understand the ordination itself. As if he [Paul] had said: 'Act so, that the gift which you received by the laying on of hands when I made you a Presbyter, may not be in vain!'" Cf. First Timothy 1:18 & 4:14f cf. Second Timothy 1:6 & 2:2,24f & 4:2-5.

Calvin's pupil, the great Scottish Presbyterian John Knox, did not disagree. Anent even the admission of Ministers of the Word and Sacraments to their Office, Knox rightly wrote the following:<sup>33</sup>

"The Apostles used imposition of hands" at "the public approbation" and the "declaration of the...Minister that the person there presented is appointed... The using of the ceremony, we judge not necessary" -- however useful that ceremony, good in itself, still may be. This is Knox's doctrine anent the ordination of Ministers. Knox does not here<sup>34</sup> mention the imposition of hands at the appointment of Ruling Elders and Deacons.<sup>35</sup>

In the 1578 *Second Book of Discipline* of the Scottish Church, however, there is much greater detail. It teaches:<sup>36</sup> "The whole polity of the Church consists in three things -- viz. in Doctrine, Discipline, and Distribution.... According to the parts of this..., arises a three-fold sort of Office-bearer in the Church -- to wit, of Ministers or Preachers, Elders or Governors, and Deacons or Distributors....

"All these may be called by one general word, 'Ministers' of the Church.... In the New Testament and time of the Gospel -- He has used the Ministry of the Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Doctrine in the administration of the Word; the Eldership for good order and administration of discipline; the Deaconship to have the care of the ecclesiastical goods."

This *Second Book* next<sup>37</sup> goes on to state -- emphases mine -- that "Vocation or Calling is common to all that should bear Office in the Church -- which is the lawful way by which

qualified persons are promoted to any spiritual Office within the Church of God.... This ordinary and outward Calling has two parts; election and ordination [alias first the selecting and then the appointing].

"Election is the choosing out of a person or persons most suitable (or best qualified) to the vacant Office, by the judgment of the Eldership and consent of the Congregation to whom the person or persons are to be appointed.... It is to be eschewed (or shunned) that a person be intruded into any of the Offices [plural!] of the Church.... None ought to be intruded or placed in the Ministry, in places already planted....

"That which is called the benefice, ought to be nothing else than the stipend of the Ministers that are lawfully called.... Ordination is the separation and sanctifying (or consecrating) of the person appointed, to God and His Church -- after he is well-trying and found qualified. The ceremonies of ordination are fasting, earnest prayer, and imposition of hands of the Eldership."

Indeed, the above provisions certainly seem to permit (though not to require) that even Ruling Elders are appointable by the imposition of the hands of their fellow Elders. Whether Teaching Elders or Ruling Elders, or possibly even both.

The *Second Book*, then, clearly states<sup>38</sup> that "unto the Pastors only appertains the administration of the Sacraments -- in like manner as the administration of the Word.... And generally, all public declarations that are to be made in the Church before the Congregation concerning the ecclesiastical affairs, [are] belonging of the Office of a Minister. For he is a Messenger and Herald between God and the people in all these affairs.

"The word 'Elder' in the Scriptures" -- the *Second Book* goes on to explain<sup>39</sup> -- "is taken largely comprehending as well the Pastors and Doctors as those who are called Seniors or Elders.... It is not necessary that all Elders be also Teachers of the Word -- albeit the chief ought to be such, and so are worthy of double honour....

"As the Pastors and Doctors should be diligent in teaching and sowing the seed of the Word, so the Elders should be careful in seeking the fruit of the same in the people. It appertains to them to assist the Pastor in examination of them that come to the Lord's table.... It pertains to the Eldership to take heed that the Word of God [by the Minister of the Word and Sacraments] be purely preached within their bounds, the Sacraments rightly administered," *etc.*

Finally, the *Second Book* tells us<sup>40</sup> that "the Office of the Deacons...is an ordinary and perpetual ecclesiastical function in the Church of Christ. Of what properties [qualities] and duties he ought to be that is called to this function, we remit it to the manifest Scriptures.

"The Deacon ought to be called and elected, as the rest of the spiritual Officers, of the which election (it) was spoken before. Their Office and power is to receive and to distribute all the ecclesiastical goods unto them to whom they are appointed. This they ought to do according to the judgment and appointment of the Presbyteries or Elderships (of the which the Deacons are not Members), that the patrimony of the Church and poor be not converted to private men's uses nor wrongly distributed."

The *Subordinate Standard* of the Presbyterian Church of Australia teaches<sup>41</sup> that the "covenant of grace was differently administered in the time of the Law and in the time of the Gospel. Under the Law it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews -- all foreshadowing Christ to come....

"Under the Gospel, when Christ the substance was exhibited the ordinances in which this covenant is dispensed -- are the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper which, though fewer in number and administered with more simplicity and less outward glory..., is held forth in more fullness...and spiritual efficacy to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles, and is called the 'New Testament.' There are not therefore two covenants of grace different in substance, but one and the same under various dispensations."

Consequently now,<sup>42</sup> "there be only two Sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the Gospel -- that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord. Neither of which may be dispensed by any but by a Minister of the Word lawfully ordained (saving where the General Assembly has made a special provision to the contrary, that the people of God may not be left without these sealing ordinances)....

"The outward element to be used in this Sacrament [of Baptism] is water, wherewith the party is to be baptized...by a Minister of the Gospel lawfully called thereunto.... The Lord Jesus hath, in this ordinance [of the Holy Supper], appointed His Ministers to declare His Word of institution to the people -- to pray and bless the elements of bread and wine and thereby to set them apart from a common to a holy use."

We should further note that the *Westminster Directory for the Publick Worship of God* -- indisputably a Standard of the Presbyterian Church in Queensland<sup>43</sup> in 1863, and too of many of the other Australian States prior to 1901 -- again reserves the preaching of the Word only to "the Pastors and Teachers." In addition, and even then only occasionally, it also permits preaching to "such as intend the Ministry" (alias Theological Candidates) -- "if allowed by the Presbytery thereunto."

Similarly, "Baptism...is not to be administered in any case by any private person, but by a Minister of Christ called to be the Steward of the 'Mysteries of God'" (First Corinthians 1:1 & 3:22 to 4:2). The same is true of the "administration" of the Lord's Supper by "the Minister" -- and at a frequency "determined by the Minister and other Church-Governors" alias the Session of Ruling Elders "of each Congregation."<sup>44</sup>

Also the great Southern Presbyterian Theologian in North America, Rev. Professor Dr. James Henley Thornwell, desired to stress the obvious though then-neglected truth that all Ruling Elders (without themselves being competent to preach the Word or to administer the Sacraments) are fully the equals of the Teaching Elders as regards the ruling function of both. So he went right ahead and wrote<sup>45</sup> that provided they were also members of the Presbytery, such Ruling Elders may fully participate in the imposition of hands at the ordination even of Ministers of the Word and Sacraments (and, more obviously also at the appointment of their own fellow Ruling Elders).

In terms of Calvin's Calvinism, such actions -- though indeed innovative yet really quite unnecessary -- no way invalidate the appointments of the new Church Officers thus elected. For even under the Thornwellian system, the appointments themselves are still being effected exclusively by the appointing Minister or Ministers of the Word and Sacraments in the Presbytery (irrespective of the laying on of hands by the presbytery's Ruling Elders). For the rest, the Thornwellian thesis can certainly be seen as a useful protest against possible incipient sacerdotalism under the Preaching Elders.

Under Thornwell's influence, the original 1975 *Book of Church Order* of the Presbyterian Church in America<sup>46</sup> similarly holds that after an elected Ruling Elder or Deacon has answered the installation questions in the affirmative, "the Minister shall proceed to set apart the Candidate with prayer and the laying on of the hands of the Session to the Office of Ruling Elder (or Deacon)." Yet even here, the setting apart of the Elder or Deacon still proceeds exclusively from the Minister of the Word and Sacraments! The Members of the Session of Elders (including the Minister himself) immediately thereafter, merely confirm that already-accomplished 'setting apart' by the Minister -- and so confirm it by the further (unnecessary yet not unsuitable) imposition of all their hands on him.

However, especially in our own Presbyterian Church of Australia -- more closely following the Church Polity of Calvin and Knox and Westminster than that of Thornwell -- it would be more appropriate for us to speak not of the 'ordination' but rather of the appointment of Ruling Elders. For "the Presbyterian Church of Australia holds the doctrine of the Eldership as set forth in the *Westminster Form of Church Government*."<sup>47</sup> And that latter document, while indeed outlining the functions of Ruling Elders after their appointment, speaks of the actual ordination not of Ruling Elders but only of Ministers of the Word and Sacraments.

We conclude, then, that there is no Biblical objection to only ministerial hands being laid upon a Candidate at his or her Baptism -- nor again at his or her later admission to the Lord's Supper (Acts 9:10-18 and Hebrews 6:1-2). Nor can there be any Biblical objection to the laying on of ministerial hands -- whenever an appropriate person is being appointed or even being recommissioned to the office of Deacon, Deaconess, Elder, or Minister of the Word and Sacraments. Acts 6:3-6 and First Timothy 5:17-22 and Second Timothy 1:6 *cf.* the *Apostolic Constitutions* VIII:19-20 *etc.*

However, in every such case, in Holy Scripture it seems that the imposition is rendered not by the hands of the Officers of that Office to which the appointment is being made. But only by the hands of those Officers who are Ministers of the Word and Sacraments. Acts 6:3-6 & 13:1-5 & 14:14,23 and First Timothy 1:18 & 4:14 and Second Timothy 1:6 & 4:2-5.

We would therefore support any overture asking that one's induction into the Office of all Believers (by the unrepeatabe reception of Baptism) be accompanied by the laying on of hands of the Minister of the Word and Sacraments. Acts 9:10-18.

Similarly, we would also support any Overture requesting that one's post-baptismal advance within that same Office of all Believers (by the repeatable reception of the Lord's Supper), initially be preceded immediately by the 'confirmatory' laying on of hands of the Minister of the Word and Sacraments. Hebrews 5:4,12 to 6:2.

We would, moreover, support any Overture asking for the appointment of Ruling Elders by the laying on of hands (First Timothy 5:17-22). But only when made subject to at least one clear and specific provision.

Such an Overture would need to make it patently clear that such an appointment to the Office of Ruling Elder by the laying on of hands, in no way confers the power to preach the Word and to administer the Sacraments. For our *Subordinate Standard* (the *Westminster Confession* at 27:4 & 28:2 & 29:3) clearly reserves such power to the Minister of the Word and Sacraments alone. Ideally, such an Overture should also preferably restrict the use of the word 'ordination' (as does the *Westminster Confession*) only to the initial appointment of the Minister of the Word and Sacraments alone.

Although we regard the improvement of the operational Office of Ruling Elder as more crucial -- we would also support any Overture asking for the appointment of male Deacons by the laying on of hands, subject to the same afore-mentioned proviso. Acts 6:2-4.

Preferably only after amending the present mode of appointment to the Office of Ruling Elder and only after re-erecting the quiescent Office of Deacon in our midst -- we would further support any Overture asking for the appointment of Deaconesses specifically by the laying on of hands. However, once again, only subject to the same proviso as above -- and to minister only to needy female Members of the Congregation. *Apostolic Constitutions*, VIII:19-20.

We would, further yet, also support any Overture aiming to recommission any of the above Officers -- within the same Office already occupied -- to a more specialized function or location. An example would be the recommissioning of a Ruling Elder who moves to another Congregation and then gets re-elected for ministry there.

Finally, we would support -- immediately -- any Overture aiming (post-ordinationally) to recommission within that same Office, any already-ordained Ministers to a more specialized Ministry (new to them). Such would occur where Ministers of the Word and Sacraments get relieved of their present pastoral responsibilities in order to be set apart by the laying on of hands exclusively as Itinerant Evangelists or as Seminary Professors or as Foreign Missionaries *etc.* Acts 13:1-5 & 21:8 *cf.* Ephesians 4:11*f* and Second Timothy 4:2-5.

It is clear that some modern denominations are rather confused about the above, and also about what the Church really needs. Thus a recent ecclesiastical request<sup>48</sup> calling for one of its Committee's to "clarify the relationship between the New Testament words related to 'ordain' and 'minister' and the Westminster Confession of Faith **concept** of 'Minister of the Word lawfully ordained,' with a **view** to optimising the Church's opportunity to 'equip the saints for the work of **the Ministry**'" -- emphases mine, F.N. Lee.

Note in this request, that its main purpose was not to understand either the Bible's or the Confession's teaching of the work of the Minister of the Word lawfully ordained. The purpose here was instead to optimize the Church's opportunity to equip the saints for the work of **the Ministry**. This was to be done by clarifying the relationship not between the whole Bible's but between the New Testament's words related to 'ordain' and 'minister' and merely the *Confession's* **concept** of 'Minister of the Word lawfully ordained' as distinct from its clear teaching.



In responding to his denomination's request, its Committee's Convener wrongly responded<sup>49</sup> that his Church had appointed a Committee to clarify the relationship between words not in the New Testament but in the Bible relating to 'ordain' and 'minister' -- and merely "**a phrase**" in the *Westminster Confession* (and not even its concept). Yet, after then conceding that most of the Bible's 29 uses of the words 'ordain' and 'ordination' are in the 1053-page Old Testament, he refers to this but four times in his next paragraph.<sup>50</sup> Then he spends the rest of his five-page paper citing largely from the NIV's 320-page New Testament, and from some Church History.<sup>51</sup>

He continues:<sup>52</sup> "Nowhere does the NIV (the *New International Version*) use the terms 'ordain, ordination' in connection with those holding a position of responsibility in the New Testament Church" -- apparently a body quite unrelated to the Old Testament Church! "However, oldest versions of the English Bible used 'ordain' with greater frequency.... It is used in the KJV, for example, at Acts 14:23 and...at Titus 1:5....

"The framers of the WCF were familiar with the traditional use of 'ordain'.... Their choice of such a word...is not solely derived from the Biblical usage, however, but is influenced by the tradition of its use in the Church.... So the Word 'ordain' in the 17th century (when both the KJV and the WCF were published) carried with it some connotations which might be different from or additional to those surrounding the underlying Greek words in New Testament passages.... As part of the preparation for the institution of the Episcopacy in 1610, the word 'ordain' was reintroduced in the latter part of the 16th century, and is found in the *Second Book of Discipline* (1578).... The words 'Minister, Ministry' have a somewhat parallel story to tell....

"The leadership structure which our denomination has, is that of an 'ordained' Ministry of Presbyters.... During the latter half of the twentieth century, [under Brethrenistic influence] there has been a significant shift in the way Christians generally understand and relate to the Church.... 'The ministry of the laity' has come into prominence....

Traditional patterns of leadership...not recognised as leaders..., [now] preach...or lead in the celebration of the Lord's Dinner.... Such authority or 'rule' (a component of the concept of 'Pastor/Shepherd') as there is within the church, is shared with other leaders.... Leaders are to be player-coaches....

"The act of laying hands on persons appointed to certain positions, occurs a number of times in the New Testament.... The Scottish Reformers avoided the use of the laying on of hands."

The latter statement is not quite true.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, even the Committee Convener himself then added: "It was reintroduced in the late 16th century."<sup>54</sup>

He continues: "Is ordination an outmoded piece of baggage we could well do without?.... It may well be time to replace such words and actions.... It is the judgment of the undersigned that the word 'ordain' could well be replaced with a word like 'appoint'... A case could be made for doing away with the laying on of hands.... It is the position of the undersigned that the Presbyterian Church...should take steps to remove the words 'ordain' and 'ordination' and that the use of the words 'appoint' [and] 'appointment' be encouraged in all situations where a person is formally acknowledged."

The Convener's Committee's other members submitted their own reports. Thus that titled *Let the Leaders Lead and the People Minister!*, although rightly stressing both the vertical and horizontal aspects of service in the Church from First Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4, also warns against<sup>55</sup> "the traditional tendency to restrict the ambit of the word 'ministry' just to a select group within the Eldership. It is interesting to note that ministry is here said to belong to the people, not the leaders.... The actual ministry belongs first to the people, and not to the leaders of the Church."

Less reliably, it continues:<sup>56</sup> "This New Testament teaching on the people's ministry ...was all but lost under the Clericalism which dominated the Church's life until well into the modern era.... The Reformers are sometimes credited with breaking this Clericalism and making way for 'the priesthood of all believers.' Their contribution should not be over-estimated, however. For while substituting the Reformed Pastorate and Eldership for the Roman Catholic Priesthood, the Reformers appear not to have encouraged a widespread recognition and releasing of the people's ministry." But such was not the teaching of Calvin, nor of Luther!

This report then goes on:"In so far as the Westminster documents deal with church order, attention is mostly given to matters of church rule or government -- with comparatively little attention to spiritual ministry especially by the people. One notable exception is restriction of sacramental administration to 'lawfully ordained' Ministers of the Word (*W.C.F.* 27:4)....

"Eldership,' Leadership' and 'Ministry' are not synonyms. A number of...Presbyterian Sessions have used structures of ministries, committees and task forces to increase the People's participation in ministry and decision-making.... When coupled with recognition and support for the People's ministry through a public act of appointment or setting apart, such patterns appear to offer a Biblically-respectable balance between leaders leading and People ministering."

Ah, "we the People" -- as the U.S. Constitutional documents pseudo-democratically later suggested, and as the Constitutions of the later 'People's Republics' later elaborated! Fortunately, the above reports were challenged.

As one Sub-Committee Report to Presbytery declared<sup>57</sup> of the above General Assembly Committee's reports, the General Assembly's minute 162 "does not restrictively appoint the above 'All-NSW' GAA Theological Committee to write any or all such papers, but merely to "provide" them to the Presbyteries and Commissioners.... It is appropriate to respond to the two papers....

"In general, the Burke Paper should be endorsed for rightly stressing that all Christians should be and are in some or other kind of Christian Ministry (*W.C.F.* 25:2-3 & 26:1-3 and *Heidelberg Catechism* QQ. & AA. 49 to 55).... [But] the statement on the Paper's p. 2 lines 4-5 (that "the Reformers appear not to have encouraged a widespread recognition and releasing of the people's ministry"), needs amplification.

"For Luther had high regard for the holy Christian Ministry of Farming. Indeed, he believed his wife's Christian Ministry of Dishwashing was just as important to God as was Luther's own Christian Ministry of translating the Bible into German (First Corinthians 10:31). Yet he denied that unreformed priests and monks and nuns were involved in Christian Ministry."<sup>58</sup>

"It needs stating that Calvin<sup>59</sup> regarded the Ministry of the Christian Magistrate as being quite as important as the Christian Ministry of Preaching. [No man can doubt that civil authority is in the sight of God not only sacred and lawful, but the most sacred and by far the most honourable of all stations in mortal life.]

"He held that every permitted occupation is a holy calling from God. He regarded 'agriculture, shoemaking and shaving [as]...lawful ordinances of God' -- inasmuch as 'all human labour is of equal value,' and 'all are in the Lord's service.' So 'all Craftsmen of whatever kind who serve the needs of men are Ministers of God' (First Corinthians 7:14-24).

In response to the Davies Paper, "the word 'ordain' indeed needs to be divested of the unbiblical meaning which some sacerdotalizers have attached to it. Yet the concept as such is clearly Biblical, not only as regards Ministers of the Word but also as regards Ruling Elders and non-sessional Deacons.

"Moreover, one may not dispensationalistically divorce the unfolded New Testament blossoming of Office from its Old Testament bud. Exodus 18:21 and Numbers 8:10f & 27:18f and Deuteronomy 1:13f & 34:9 and Mark 3:9-14f and Luke 9:1f & 10:1f and Acts 6:1-7 & 13:1-3 and First Timothy 4:14f & 5:17-22 and Second Timothy 1:6 & 4:1-5 and also Hebrews 5:1-4 & 8:1-6....

"The abandonment of the idea of 'ordination' is not to be recommended in respect of the Ministry of the Word or the Ministry of the Eldership or the Ministry of the Diaconate. See our Subordinate Standard, *W.C.F.* 27:4 & 30:1.

"Moreover, in Minute 131.1 of 1967 -- our General Assembly of Australia has declared 'that the Presbyterian Church of Australia holds the doctrine of the Eldership as set forth in the *Westminster Form of Presbyterian Church Government*' etc. That latter states: 'Ordination is always to be continued in the Church (Titus 1:5 and First Timothy 5:21f),' and that 'Ordination is the solemn setting apart of a person to some publick Office (Acts 6:3-6).' These texts here apply not to Preachers but to Elders and Deacons, so cannot fairly be construed sacerdotally....

"The concept of ordination should be preserved in respect of the Ministries of the Word and Sacraments, the Ruling Eldership, and the Diaconate.... The word 'appointment' should be used in respect of other church ministries....

"The Sub-Committee...resolved to recommend that Presbytery make the General Assembly of Australia aware of the availability, at cost plus postage, of the following papers available from Professor Lee. 1, *Triune God and Triune Office* (34 pp.); 2, *The Ministry of the Word* (132 pp.); 3, *The Office of Deacon* (75 pp.); 4, *The Ruling Eldership* (37 pp.); 5, *Manumission or the Imposition of Hands at Ordination* (10 pp.)."

## **SHOULD ELDERS (AND PREACHERS) EVER BE ROTATED?**

In 1990, the Presbytery of the Northern Rivers overtured the New South Wales State Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia. The aim of the Overture was to get the

N.S.W. Code amended, in order to provide for the introduction of term service for Elders. After expiry of that term, they could then be re-inducted into a further term of service -- if they so desired, and if they still enjoyed the confidence of the Congregation they had been ruling.

The Presbytery of the Northern Rivers in its Overture argued<sup>60</sup> that "a regular election of Elders would allow Congregations to be more frequently reminded of the duties of the Eldership and the qualities desired in an Elder." It stated that "Congregations, thus reminded, would more consistently seek to discover and develop the spiritual gifts of its Members."

It claimed that "a more frequent election of the Elders would maximize the Congregation's use of its human and spiritual resources." It pointed out that "those elected would have the opportunity to rededicate themselves to their task, conscious of the support and encouragement of the people." And it insisted that "a commitment to a specific period of service would facilitate the maintenance of enthusiasm."

The Overture was altogether proper. For it is the State Assemblies that have final jurisdiction in Australia, in all matters of government such as that of the Eldership. It is also the State Assemblies (and neither the Presbyteries nor the General Assembly of Australia) that legislate on the qualifications for the Eldership.

The general principle in Holy Scripture, seems to be that Christ's Church has Offices which are permanent.<sup>61</sup> But the Church's Officers should sometimes be reshuffled into different jobs.

Sometimes, they should be allowed to rest for a while. Sometimes, they should be retired honourably. And occasionally, they should be deposed in dishonour.

But they must always ultimately be replaced. Whether by geographical relocation; or by their own election to another different Office; or by becoming *emeritus* at a certain age; or at death.<sup>62</sup>

In Holy Scripture, extra Elders were appointed to take over much of the work done by Moses -- lest he wore himself out.<sup>63</sup> Also the Aaronic Priesthood itself was indeed lifelong. Yet the period of active service was shorter. For its members were not to commence priestly service till thirty years old; and they were to retire from active duty at age fifty.<sup>64</sup>

Consider too "the division of the sons of Aaron.... Eleazar and Ithamar executed the Priest's Office.... David distributed them...according to the Offices, in their service.... Thus they were divided by lot, one sort with another. For the Governors...of the house of God were the sons of Eleazar....

"The first lot came forth to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah, the third to Harim, the fourth to Seorim [*etc.*].... These were the orderings of them, in their service, to come into the house of the Lord.... These likewise cast lots over against their brethren the sons of Aaron."<sup>65</sup>

A little later, we read that the "Captains of thousands and hundreds and their Officers that served...in any matter of the courses...came in and went out month by month throughout all the months of the year.... Over the first course for the first month, was Jashobeam.... And over the

course of the second month, was Dodai.... The third Captain of the host for the third month, was Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, a Chief Priest.... Also for the courses of the Priests and the Levites."<sup>66</sup>

Now it should be noted that the term of service alias the "course" of the ecclesiastical Officers described in the Old Testament, is still to be found at the beginning of the New. Thus it was with the father of John the baptizer.

For "there was...a certain Priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia.... And it came to pass, that while he executed the Priest's Office before God in the order of his course, according to the custom of the Priest's Office -- his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.... And it came to pass that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house."<sup>67</sup>

So, according to the Holy Scriptures, even while in active official service, various bearers of the same kind of Office were asked to render work of a somewhat different nature than that being done by their fellow Officers in that same Office.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, after a longer or a shorter term of official work, these active Officers might also be released from active service. Indeed, they might later be re-enrolled back into the active service of that same Office -- in a system of staggered shifts.<sup>69</sup> And they might even be promoted from Deacon to Elder, or (with further theological training) from Elder to Preacher.<sup>70</sup>

In terms of Church History, the Protestant Reformation too agreed with Holy Scripture in emphasizing the permanence of Church Offices. Again agreeing with Scripture, the Reformation did **not** however emphasize any life-long permanence of uninterrupted service by individual Officers who bore Office.

Thus, the great Reformer Martin Luther very strongly emphasized the universal Priesthood of all Believers. Indeed, he constantly maintained that the difference between the clergy and the laity did not imply any distinction of class and condition. Yet he still stressed the distinction between the discharge of official duties -- and those of a more private and personal nature.<sup>71</sup>

The Reformed Theologian Wolfgang Capito, after marrying the widow of Oecolampadius, became closely associated with Calvin's mentor Martin Bucer. Following the model of the Elders appointed by Moses, Capito argued in his 1535 *Frankfurt Church Order* that the Elders chosen by the Congregation should stay in office for "only three years -- in order...that several may learn church duties, and interest themselves in church affairs."<sup>72</sup>

Especially's Bucer's student John Calvin approached Presbyterianism from the starting point of the Biblical Presbyter or Elder -- as the Root-Office in the Christian Church. See Hebrews 11:3. Indeed, Calvin grounded the Eldership in Holy Scripture -- from Genesis to Revelation.<sup>73</sup>

Calvin rightly decreed that "from the beginning, each Church [or Congregation] had its Senate" or Sessional Government. These Sessions of Presbyters alias Elders were "composed of pious, grave and venerable men in whom was lodged the power of correcting faults.... We are to regard the Office of Government as necessary for all ages."<sup>74</sup> To them "was committed the censure of manners and discipline."<sup>75</sup>

The great genius of Geneva very strongly opposed the Romish perversion of the allegedly 'indelible character' of the bearer of that Office. He also castigated the institution of inert or malfunctioning 'Bishoprics.' Demanding functional excellence -- Calvin utterly detested the papal maxim 'once a Priest, always a Priest!'

Accordingly, Calvin's Swiss Presbyterian *Geneva Church Orders* of 1541 and 1559 and 1561 all called for an annual change in the official duties of the active Elders.<sup>76</sup> And in his 1541 *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, he said of the Elders:<sup>77</sup> "At the end of the year after their election..., they shall present themselves...so that it may be decided whether they should be retained or replaced." Too, in his 1559 *Discipline Ecclesiastique*, Elders ('Anciens') formed the Church's Senate in an Consistory which was elected annually.<sup>78</sup>

The *French Presbyterian Church Order* of 1559 and John Knox's *Scottish Presbyterian Church Order* of 1560 both reflected Calvin's influence, and required the regular resting and replacement of the active Officers. This included the appointment of new Elders into, and the release of yet other (longer-serving) Elders out of, active service in the Session.<sup>79</sup>

Indeed, Calvin's student Knox's 1560 *First Book of Discipline* required that Elders be chosen every year. Why? "Lest of long continuance of such Officers, men presume upon the liberty of the Kirk."<sup>80</sup>

For, as Rev. John Macpherson states in his book *Presbyterianism*: "The right of the people to elect their Office-bearers is here sufficiently stated and provided for.... Jealousy for the preservation of these rights, led to the yearly election of Elders."<sup>81</sup>

Consequently, right at the very beginning of the Calvinist Reformation, regular termination of limited periods of service for active Elders and other Church Officers was practised almost throughout the entire Protestant world. This was the position in Germany, France, Switzerland, South Holland, Belgium, and Scotland. Only in North Holland and in the Continental Refugee Churches exiled in England -- and apparently even there only to help promote stability in an extremely precarious and fluid situation -- were Elders originally elected for an uninterrupted term of life-long service.<sup>82</sup>

As the 1867 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia acknowledged:<sup>83</sup> "In the *Discipline Ecclesiastique* (of John Calvin) of 1559..., Elders and Deacons were elected for one year.... In 1556, when Knox returned to Geneva as the 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 Calvin's *Discipline Ecclesiastique* in which laymen, appointed annually, had their place in the Church Courts."

Too, the Sixth Head of Knox's 1560 *First Book of Discipline* requires<sup>84</sup> that "the Elders...are changed (which must be every year).... Both the Deacons and Elders, being changed, shall deliver to them that shall be new elected all sums of money.... For the free and yearly election of Deacons and Elders shall suffer none to usurp a perpetual domination over the Kirk."

Yet the early practice of the Reformed Church in Northern Holland, with its constant barrage of communications directed at the Continental Refugee Churches exiled as aliens in

England, was not without effect on the British Church herself. Perhaps this is what influenced even the 1578 *Second Book of Discipline of the Scottish Church* to state six years after Knox's death that 'once called, Elders are not to leave their Office.'<sup>85</sup> Of course, none of the prior Reformers had spoken of "leaving one's office" -- but only of terminating, at least for a while, one's current period of active service therein.

Presumably, it was only from 1578 onward that this notion of "non-resting Elders" first began to take root -- more than half a century after the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. Yet it is even more important to realize that the original and consistently Protestant principle of term service in the Eldership soon triumphed -- even in the Reformed Churches of North Holland themselves.

For their own earlier practice of electing Elders to serve actively and incessantly for the rest of their lives, was now amended. This was a result of the continuing and increasing influence of the writings of the Frenchman John Calvin, and the Scotsman John Knox.

Henceforth, even in North Holland, the Congregations began to practise annual rotation of half of the Session. Thus that half was relieved from active duties and official obligations -- after completing a period of two years of incessant service. Indeed, both the 1571 *General Assembly of Emden*<sup>86</sup> and the *Book of Church Order*<sup>87</sup> of the 1618finternational 'T-U-L-I-P' Synod of Dordt itself -- took this more Calvinistic position.

Both Emden and Dordt, at their General Assembly meetings, gave three reasons for adopting this point of view. They declared (1) that the special gifts were not limited to just a few active Elders. They declared (2) that Elders should not be encumbered with active duties ceaselessly for the rest of their earthly lives, while other members of the Congregation suffered no such encumbrances. And they declared (3) that the danger of an "Elder-ocratic tyranny" developing, is very great -- whenever the Government of any Congregation is permanently limited to just a small number of power-wielding people.<sup>88</sup>

Indeed, "where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counsellors, there is safety." Proverbs 11:14. "Without counsel, purposes are disappointed; but in the multitude of counsellors, they are established." Proverbs 15:22. "For by wise counsel, you shall make war; and in multitude of counsellors, there is safety." Proverbs 24:6.

To these reasons, we ourselves would add a fourth. (4) Let us charitably assume the Elders have indeed been working hard in the Eldership, as they certainly should have been. They should then be entitled to enjoy at least a short rest from the active duties of their Office (while fresh new Elders taken over in the interim).

Now some would find a conflict between the doctrine anent the lifelong serving Eldership of the 1560 *First Book of Discipline* and that of the 1578 *Second Book of Discipline* of the Reformed Church of Scotland (Presbyterian). Yet there is no conflict.

For each rightly regarded the Elder as elected for life. But each also regarded lifelong Elders as relievable after a term of active service, when other Elders are to be appointed to take over that work (for a similar term).

Declares the 1560 *First Book of Discipline*: "The election of Elders...ought to be made every year once.... Lest, of long continuance of such Officers, men presume upon the liberty of the Kirk. [And yet] it hurteth not that one be received in(to) Office more years than one, so that he be appointed yearly by common and free election.... How the votes and suffrages may be best received, so that every man may give his vote freely -- every several kirk may take such order as seems best [to] them."<sup>89</sup>

Declares the 1578 *Second Book of Discipline*:<sup>90</sup> "We call those Elders, whom the Apostles call Presidents or Governors. Their Office [as distinct from the total term of that Office]...is perpetual.... Elders once lawfully called to the Office, and having gifts of God meet to exercise the same, may not leave it again.

"Albeit, such a number of Elders may be chosen...that one part of them may relieve another for a reasonable space -- as was among the Levites under the Law in serving the temple.... Yet they ought not to be deposed who through age, sickness or other accidents become unmeet to do their Office. In which case, their honour should remain to them [as Elders Emeritus]..., and others ought to be provided to do their Office."

Our conclusion, then, is that the Offices of Preacher and Elder are indeed perpetual. Howbeit, any Officer may be relieved from the active service required by that Office in a particular Congregation.<sup>91</sup> This may be at his own request; at the Congregation's request; or at the request of either the Session or the Presbytery. And during that time of resting from those official duties, another Officer may be elected and installed to execute actively the duties of that resting Officer -- in his place.

We may suitably close with a revised citation from the very end of our own 1982 paper *Suggestions re Godly Ladies Wrongly Appointed to All-Male Church Offices*. There, we declared that Elders legally and regularly ordained, are indeed appointed for life -- or until deposed. Yet they function in the Congregation where they were appointed, only until they leave it.

Presbyterian Churches would do well to move toward the resurrection of the Biblical and Historic-Presbyterian system -- of "rotating" Elders into and out of active service, at stated intervals. Thereby, life-long Elders are retired from active duty after specified terms of service -- at which time they are also re-eligible to be re-inducted into active duty.

This 'rotation system' was the original way in which the Eldership functioned in Historic Presbyterianism at the time of the Reformation. It is the predominant system of Eldership in Presbyterian circles world-wide today. Much more importantly, it is also thoroughly Biblical.

This Biblical and Historic-Presbyterian system of rotating Elders into and out of active duty, is also eminently practical. It has desirable incidental advantages -- especially in solving vexing ecclesiastical problems.

It not only regularly removes male deadwood from Sessions and from the Larger Courts of the Church at stated intervals and without traumatic embarrassment. But its resurrection would also automatically and speedily promote the painless re-emergence of the exclusively all-male Eldership required by the Holy Scriptures.



## SHOULD ELDERS (AND PREACHERS) EVER BE TERMINATED?

The general Scriptural principle seems to be that Christ's Church has permanent Offices,<sup>92</sup> but the Church's Officers are sometimes to be reshuffled into different jobs. Sometimes they are to be honourably (or dishonourably) deposed. But always they are to be replaced at specified ages, or at death, or by geographical relocation elsewhere, or by their own election to other different Offices.<sup>93</sup>

God, of course, has always occupied and shall always continue to occupy His Office of eternal Prophet-Priest-King. His image man too occupied that Office, until Adam fell into sin. But God apparently restored and re-installed him, after he repented and believed in the coming of the Second and Last Adam to crush Satan's skull.<sup>94</sup>

God installed but then removed Saul (and his descendants) from the Office of king. And God replaced him with David and his descendants right down to the coming of Christ as the Second Adam.<sup>95</sup>

The removal of Maachah from the Office of 'King Mother' is particularly interesting. Second Chronicles tells us that when "Asa heard...the prophecy of Oded the Prophet, he took courage and put away the abominable idol out of all the land.... And also concerning Maachah the mother of Asa the King, he removed her from being Queen -- because she had made an idol in a grove."<sup>96</sup>

Even more spectacular is the way in which the Priest Jehoiada succeeded in removing wicked Athaliah from the Queenship. "Jehoiada sent and fetched the rulers...and took an oath of them in the house of the Lord.... The Captains over the hundreds did according to all things that Jehoiada the Priest commanded.... He brought forth the King's son, and put the crown upon him.... And they made him King, and anointed him.... Athaliah rent her clothes, and cried out: 'Treason, Treason!' But Jehoiada the Priest commanded the Captains...and said unto them, 'Have her forth!'"<sup>97</sup> Remove her, and chase her away!

After a string of prophets and priests and kings who became false-prophets and false-priests and false-kings and who were then removed from the prophethood and the priesthood and the kingship,<sup>98</sup> Matthias was elected to the Office earlier occupied and then vacated by Judas.<sup>99</sup> And the first Deacons were later elected, to perform some of the functions earlier relinquished by the Apostles.<sup>100</sup>

Simon the ex-sorcerer was apparently removed from the Church Office he vainly sought.<sup>101</sup> Some Deacons were later promoted to the Eldership, at which time they ceased to be Deacons.<sup>102</sup> Some Elders were later promoted to the Ministry of the Word and Doctrine,<sup>103</sup> and other Elders were accused and rebuked before two or three witnesses so that all might fear.<sup>104</sup> Indeed, also the malicious church leader Diotrephes may well later have been replaced.<sup>105</sup>

Wrote the Apostle John: "I wrote to the church. But Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he does -- speaking against us with malicious words!... Not content with that, he himself

does not receive the brethren -- and forbids those who would, and casts them out of the church. Beloved, do not follow that which is evil!"<sup>106</sup>

Even in the churches in the Presbytery of Western Asia Minor, there was a whole series of replacements. God warned the Angel or the Minister of the church in Ephesus: "Repent!... Or else I will come to you quickly, and will remove your candlestick."<sup>107</sup>

God warned the Angel of the church in Pergamos: "You have there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel...and to commit fornication. You also have them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent!"<sup>108</sup>

God warned the Angel of the church in Thyatira: "I have a few things against you, because you continue permitting that woman Jezebel who calls herself a Prophetess to teach and to seduce My servants.... Behold, I will cast her forth!... And all the Congregations shall know that I am He Who scrutinizes the kidneys and the hearts."<sup>109</sup> And God warned the Angel of the church in Laodicea: "Because you are lukewarm..., I will spit you out of My mouth!"

Even while in active official service, various bearers of the same kind of Office can each be asked to render work of a somewhat different nature than that being done by their fellow Officers in the same Office.<sup>111</sup> And moreover, these active Officers may also be released from active service and later re-enrolled back into active service in that Office -- in a system of staggered shifts.<sup>112</sup>

Historically, the Reformation too agreed with Scripture in emphasizing the permanence of Church Offices (but **not** that of the individual Office-bearers). "Luther...emphasized very strongly the universal priesthood of (all) believers, and constantly maintained that the difference between the clergy and the laity did not imply any distinction of class and condition but only a distinction between the regular and official discharge of duties and the discharge of such as are more private and personal."

His follower the leading Lutheran Wolfgang Capito stated in Frankfurt in 1535 that the Elders to be chosen by the Congregation should stay in office for "only three years. In order, it is shrewdly said, that several (other Members of the Congregation too) may learn church duties, and interest themselves in church affairs."<sup>114</sup>

The Calvinistic or Presbyterian branch of the Protestant Reformation saw matters somewhat differently, starting off as it did from the Biblical concept of Special Office rather than from the other equally-Biblical concept of General Office -- and its idea of the inalienable and universal Priesthood of all Believers (as had the Lutherans).<sup>115</sup> Yet, strongly opposing the Romish perversion of the allegedly-indelible character of the bearer of the Special Offices in the Church -- strongly opposing the papal maxim 'once a Priest, always a Priest!' -- Calvin's 1541 and 1559 and 1561 *Swiss Presbyterian Geneva Books of Church Order* all called for an annual change in the annual Eldership.<sup>116</sup>

Calvin's 1541 *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* required, to protect the Reformed churches against Romish hierarchy, that all Elders must retire annually. "At the end of the year after their election

by the Council, they shall present themselves to the Seignery [or Presbytery] so that it may be decided whether they should be retained or replaced."<sup>117</sup>

When Calvin's student Knox returned to Geneva in 1556 as Minister of the British Church there, he found Ruling Elders elected annually. So too, the *French Presbyterian Church Order* of 1559 and Knox's own *Scottish Presbyterian Church Order* of 1560 -- reflecting Calvin's great influence -- both required regular replacement of the ongoing activities of Officers, including the appointment of some new Elders into and the release of other old Elders out of active service in the Session.<sup>118</sup>

The Sixth and Eighth Heads of Knox's 1560 *First Book of Discipline* provides that "the Elders when they are changed (which must be **every year**), must clear their counts -- before such auditors as the Kirk shall appoint. And both the Deacons and Elders -- being changed -- shall deliver to them that shall be new elected, all sums of money....

"If this order be perfectly kept, corruption cannot suddenly enter. For the free and **yearly election** of Deacons and Elders shall suffer no one to usurp a perpetual domination of the Kirk.... The election of Elders and Deacons ought to be made once **every year**.... Lest, of long continuance of such Officers, men presume upon the liberty of the Kirk."

Six years after Knox's death, the 1578 *Second Book of Discipline* in Scotland declared: "It hurteth not that one be received in Office **more years than one**, so that he be appointed yearly by common and free election."<sup>119</sup> Indeed, annual elections of Elders continued to be held in some areas of Scotland well into the eighteenth century.

"Yea, the Seniors (or Elders) ought to take heed to the life, manners, diligence and study of their Minister. If he be worthy of admonition, they must admonish him; 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 (or flippant in behaviour), by his Elders and Deacons he ought to be admonished.... If he be found stubborn and inobedient, then may the Seniors (or Elders) of the Kirk complain to the Ministry of the two next adjacent Kirks" of the Presbytery.

"Elders once lawfully called to the Office and having gifts of God meet to exercise the same, may not leave it again. Albeit such a number of Elders may be chosen..., that one part of them may relieve another for a reasonable space -- as was among the Levites under the law in serving of the temple (First Chronicles 24:1-31 & 27:1-7 *cf.* 28:13 and Second Chronicles 8:14 *cf.* Luke 1:5-9,23)."<sup>120</sup>

As Macpherson remarks in his great book on *Presbyterianism*:<sup>121</sup> "The right of the people to elect their Office-bearers, is...(in Knox's 1560 *First Book of Discipline*) sufficiently stated and provided for.... Jealousy for the preservation of these rights, led to the yearly election of Elders and Deacons."

In the days of the Reformation, election for life was almost impossible because of the pressure of the times -- and in addition, periodic retirement was desirable in order to combat

Clericalism. The great Polish Reformer John á Lasco determined that the mature male members of the Congregation drew up the list of Candidates, from which the Session was to choose the best as Elders. This was followed in Holland.

The Sessions alone in the French Reformed churches chose the Elders. But in the churches of Calvin, Knox and the 'Cross Churches' of Southern Netherlands -- the Session chose half and the Congregation chose the rest of the Elders. The 1569 Wezel Convention required half of the Elders and Deacons to be replaced every year or every six months. Emden in 1571 said every two years.

The 1574 and 1578 Synods of Dordrecht said the same, while the latter added that Elders could be re-elected thereafter. The Synod of 's-Gravenhage in 1586 decided the term could be two or more years.

Article 27 of the *Dordt Church Order* required "that the Elders and Deacons should serve for two or more years, and that a equal number would retire annually and be replaced by others. So, a church would have the opportunity and profit of making re-election advisable"<sup>122</sup> -- in terms of Articles 22 and 24 of the *Church Order*.

As Rev. Professor Dr. T.N. Hanekom remarked in his *Reformed Church Law*:<sup>123</sup> "Other than with Rome, Reformed Church Law presupposes also the regular retirement of Elders. According to (Calvin's) *Geneva Church Order* (1541 and 1561), there was an annual exchange of Elders....

"Even in Holland and France, periodic retirement was followed as a policy..... The *Dordt Church Order* eventually upheld the policy of periodic retirement, so that every year half of the Church Council retired after a service period of two years (Acts of Emden article 15 and of Dordt article 276).

"As considerations for such a policy, the following were decisive.... Particular gifts are not limited to a few serving Elders, but are also to be found with others who must get the opportunity of putting them to the service of the Church.... Serving Elders should not for life be encumbered with duties, while others are excluded therefrom.... The danger of a hierarchical system is very great when Church Government is limited to only a small number."

Consequently, right at the very beginning of both the Lutheran and the Calvinistic traditions of the Reformation, periodic replacement of active Elders and other Church Officers was practised almost throughout the entire Protestant World (namely in Germany, France, Switzerland, Belgium, South Holland, and Scotland). Only in North Holland and in the Continental Refugee Churches exiled in England (and apparently even there only to help promote stability in an extremely precarious and fluid situation), were any Elders originally elected for life-long service.

This early practice of the Reformed Church in Northern Holland, with its constant barrage of communications to the Continental Refugee Churches exiled as aliens in England, was not without effect on the British Church herself. Perhaps this is what influenced even Andrew Melville's 1578 *Second Book of Discipline* of the Scottish Church to state six years after the Calvinistic Knox's death, that 'once called, Elders are not to leave their Office'<sup>124</sup> -- even though

annual elections of Ruling Elders continued to be held in some areas of Scotland long afterwards, and as late as 1719.

Presumably, it was only at the date of 1578 that the novel notion of "non-replaceable Elders" first began to take root (and only in a minority of the Scottish Congregations) -- more than half a century after the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. Yet, it is even more important to realize that the consistently-Protestant principle soon triumphed even in the Reformed Churches of North Holland.

For even there, their initial practice of electing life-long Elders was amended -- as a result of the continuing and increasing influence of the writings of the Frenchman John Calvin and the Scotsman John Knox. Henceforth, even in North Holland, the churches practised annual rotation of half of the Session from that half's obligations and duties -- after completion of a period of two years active service. Indeed, both the 1671 *General Assembly of Emden*<sup>125</sup> and the *Dordt Book of Church Order*<sup>126</sup> took this more Calvinistic position.

Emden and Dordt gave three reasons for this viewpoint, at their General Assemblies. They held: (a) that the special gifts were not limited to just a few active Elders; (b) that active Elders should not be encumbered with life-long duties, while other members suffered no such encumbrances; and (c) that the danger of an "Elder-ocratic tyranny" or a hierarchical system developing, is very great -- whenever the government of any church is permanently limited to just a small number of people.<sup>127</sup>

To this, we ourselves would add: (d) that if the Elders have been working hard in the Eldership, as indeed they should have been, they are entitled to at least a short rest from the duties of that Office. Fresh Elders should take over, as least for that period.

As the great American Presbyterian Professor Dr. Charles Hodge once wrote:<sup>128</sup> "For some time after the Reformation in Scotland, Ruling Elders were annually elected. Which of itself creates a presumption that they were not considered as having received a common ordination with the Ministers of the Gospel."

Our conclusion, then, is that the Offices of the Preacher and of the Elder and of the Deacon, are perpetual. However, any Officer may be relieved from active service in his Office in a particular Congregation -- either at his own request, or at the Congregation's request, or simply to enjoy a time of rest.<sup>129</sup> And, during that time, another Officer may be elected and installed to execute actively the duties of that Office in the place of the resting Officer -- so that the work of the Lord can continue uninterruptedly in that place.

## **SESSIONS, PRESBYTERIES, SYNODS AND GENERAL ASSEMBLIES**

Presbyterian government is ecclesiastical rule by Presbyters in Sessions under mature Presbyteries of Presbyters or Elders. Sessions operate in and from Presbyteries responsible for associated Sessions, and are confederately constitutive of Synods and General Assemblies.

There is thus a whole series of graded Ecclesiastical Courts (Exodus 18:12-26 and Deuteronomy 1:13-17). Some consider complaints and appeals (Deuteronomy 16:18 & 17:8-13 & 19:12). These are then all expanded in the New Testament (Matthew 10:1-5f & 18:15-20 & 28:16-20). And thus it is seen that the Bible teaches church government by Presbyteries and Synods (Acts 13:1-5 & 14:23-27 & 15:1-4,23-27 & 16:4f & 21:18-25).

As to its inception, Presbyterian government -- alias ecclesiastical rule by Presbyteries of Elders -- is not just Apostolic but also Primordial or Abrahamic and even Adamic in its antiquity. Hebrews 11:2 and Genesis 15:2 & 24:2 & 50:7. For unlike the Campbellite "Disciples" alias that congregationalistic group naming itself "The Church of Christ" (which alleges it was established in 33 A.D.) -- and unlike the Papal Church launched during the sixth century A.D. -- the representative Presbyterian Church of the Triune God was established, unto all eternity, already in 4004 B.C. (Hebrews 11:1-3).

There is great merit in seeing the Eternal Trinity -- the One God with His many Members -- as being the first and the last Presbytery. Indeed, He Himself is also the Foundation of all presbyterial government -- and of His one Church with its many Presbyteries, all baptized into His Triune Name. Matthew 28:16-20 and Ephesians 4:3-6 and First Corinthians 12:3-20.

The Triune God is a Presbytery. Genesis 1:1-3 and Daniel 7:9-13 & 9:24-27 and Matthew 28:19 and Luke 3:21-23,38 and Second Corinthians 13:14 and Revelation 1:1-5 & 4:5-8.

His Church should reflect this. Genesis 1:26 & 2:7,16 & 6:9-18 & 9:1-12 & 14:13-20 & 17:1-13 & 50:7 and Exodus 3:16f & 4:29f & 5:6-21 & 12:21 & 16:22 & 17:5-7 & 18:12-26 & 19:1-7f & 20:1f & 21:22f & 24:4-9f and Numbers 11:16 and Deuteronomy 1:13-16 & 16:18 & 17:6-10 & 19:11-15 and Psalm 105:22 & 107:32 and Ezekiel 8:1 & 14:1 & 20:1 & 33:21 and Ezra 5:5-11 & 6:7-14 & 10:8 and Nehemiah 2:16 & 4:13-21 & 7:4-7f and Matthew 18:15-20 and Acts 5:21 & 7:38 & 11:20 & 13:1f & 14:23 15:2 to 16:5 & 20:17-28 & 21:18-25 & 22:5 and Romans 11:16-26 & 12:4-8 & 16:1-17 and First Corinthians 12:3-28 and Ephesians 4:3f and Philippians 1:1 and Colossians 4:14f and First Timothy 3:1-8f & 5:17-22 and Titus 1:5-11 and Hebrews 2:12 & 10:23-29 & 11:1-4f & 12:22f & 13:7,17,20,24 and James 5:14f and First Peter 1:1 & 5:1-5 and Second Peter 2:1-5f & 3:2-7f and First John 2:13f & 2:19 and Second John 1-5 and Third John 1-11 and Revelation 1:11f & 2:1 to 3:20f & 4:4-10f & 5:8-14 & 11:16f & 19:4f & 21:12-14f & 22:4,16f.

A Presbytery or *Presbuterion* is the tool of a group of Elders (*Presbuteroi*) constituted for the government of the Church of all ages from the time of Adam right down to the final coming of Christ the Last Adam. It in turn constitutes local Sessions.

Each Ruling Elder in the Session, represents ten families in the Congregation. Genesis 18:32 and Exodus 18:21,25 and Deuteronomy 1:13-15 and Joshua 21:26 & 22:14 and Judges 6:27 & 20:10 and Ruth 4:2-11 and First Samuel 25:5 and Second Samuel 18:15 and Second Kings 25:25 and Ecclesiastes 7:19,29 and Jeremiah 41:1,2,8 and Amos 5:3 & 6:9 and Zechariah 8:23 and Ezra 8:24 and Nehemiah 11:1 and Luke 17:12,17 & 19:13.

Again, following the Trinity, it would seem that each Session should best consist of at least two or three Elders (including the Preaching Elder), and each Presbytery in turn should consist

of at least two or three Sessions. For a Presbytery or *Presbuterion* is a group of Ruling Elders, including some Preaching Elders, which governs the Church of the Triune God. First Timothy 3:1-3 & 4:14 & 5:17-22.

Such Presbyteries may be Exodus 18:25's "Rulers-of-fifty" in the Older Testament -- *e.g.*, the Session consisting of five "Rulers of ten" each ruling ten families. Presbyteries are especially regional -- *e.g.*, the Classis (usually named 'Presbytery' in English). Bigger Presbyteries are provincial -- *e.g.*, the State Assembly. Or even larger -- *e.g.*, the Synod; or national, *e.g.*, the General Assembly; or even international, *e.g.*, the Ecumenical Council.

Thus all the men as the family heads in each of ten households, choose from those heads one mature male to be the Elder-over-ten in that local tithing or ward. Every five Elders-over-ten then in turn choose one Elder-over-fifty. Next, each two Elders-over-fifty choose their own Elder-over-hundred. Thereafter, each ten Elders-over-hundred choose one of them as their representative Elder-over-thousand.

Finally, all of the Elders-over-thousand are convened to constitute the largest national Ecclesiastical Parliament of the people of God -- "the General Assembly" of the Church of the firstborn. Genesis 14:13-20<sup>f</sup> and Exodus 12:25 and Deuteronomy 1:13-17 and Second Kings 1:9<sup>f</sup> and Mark 6:40 and Luke 9:14 and Acts 6:1-7 & 14:23 to 16:5 and Hebrews 12:22<sup>f</sup>.

Clearly, then, a Presbytery -- just like the Trinity -- could consist of as few as three members. Matthew 18:15-20 & 28:19 *cf.* Deuteronomy 19:12-15. Yet it should represent perhaps a minimum of five Sessions of Christ's Church. *Cf.* Exodus 18:25's "Rulers-of-fifty" in the Older Testament -- with the five Preaching Elders in the Newer Testament which Acts 13:1 mentions within the Presbytery of Antioch.

Optimally, however, some seven Sessions are represented in a Presbytery. Rev. 1:11<sup>f</sup> to 3:22. No Presbyteries mentioned in the Word of God, ever exceed that latter size. Numbers 11:16-25 and Second Samuel 8:15-18 & 20:23-26 and First Kings 4:1-4 and Ezra 10:8-14 and Esther 1:10<sup>f</sup> and Luke 10:1-7.

In many Patristic Churches there were approximately seven Congregations associated in each Presbytery, and then again seven such Presbyteries associated together in one Regional Synod. Acts 14:21-26 & 15:3-25 & 16:1-5 and Revelation 1:4 to 3:22. Thus that famous authority on the Westminster Assembly, Rev. Dr. Alexander F. Mitchell, notes in his essay on the early pre-papal *Keltic Church* of Britain that the latter was 'High' Presbyterian.

Mitchell explains<sup>130</sup> that "in South Britain, there were [Overseers]...with distinct 'Sees' [alias Sessions]. There were at least seven [Presbyteries of Sessions] in Wales at the time of the conference...with Austin of Canterbury [around A.D. 600].... They seem to have been...located in groups of seven near each other."

Even as late as the eighth century, as Sir Winston Churchill points out, it was Alcuin of York who was the chief adviser of the Continental Emperor Charles the Great. Also Moeller observes that Alcuin was a worthy representative of Celto-Culdee learning on Anglo-Saxon ground.

Alcuin gave discourses on the Trinity (Whom he said governs the *trivium* of grammar and rhetoric and dialectic) -- and Who further operates through the fullness of creation (north and south and east and west) as reflected in the *quadrivium* of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music. He also held Christ Himself is the Master of the Academy, and that the above-mentioned 'seven arts' are an introduction to the septuple fullness of the Lord's Holy Spirit. Cf. Isaiah 11:1f and Revelation 1:4f & 1:11-20 & 3:1f & 4:5-11 & 5:6f.

Local Sessions of Presbyters meet under the Moderatorship of a Preaching Elder. Second Kings 6:32f and Ezekiel 8:1 & 14:1 & 20:1 cf. Revelation 2:1,8,12,18 & 3:1,7,14. Between such Sessions and the General Assembly -- stand all the regional Church Councils of Presbyteries.

Each of these latter is also named 'Classis' (Latin) or *Kleesis* (Greek) -- alias that which is convened from the called-out Church or *Ek-klees-ia*, or that which has been called (from *kalein*, the Greek word meaning 'to call'). For the meetings of those presbyterial 'Classes' (the plural of the Latin 'Classis') are regularly called, in order to discharge the functions mentioned two paragraphs later below.

In many respects, the regional Presbytery is the most important of all presbyterial bodies. For it stands between the Elders-over-ten locally, and the Elders-over-thousand provincially -- and clearly links the former to the latter. Exodus 18:12-21 cf. Deuteronomy 1:13-17.

Every regional Presbytery should manifest at least the following sevenfold functions. Firstly, meeting together prayerfully and encouragingly to heed God's Word (Exodus 18:12-22 and Acts 13:1-5 & 14:21-27). Secondly, training and ordaining and disciplining and disciplining Preaching Elders for the Christian Church (First Timothy 4:14 cf. Second Timothy 1:6 & 3:14-17 & 4:1-5 & 5:17-22). Thirdly, sending Ministers or Missionaries into established Congregations and also creating new ones (Acts 13:1-5 & 14:23).

Fourthly, hearing appeals from local Sessions of Elders (Exodus 18:12-26 and Deuteronomy 16:18 & 17:8-13 & 19:12f cf. Matthew 18:15-20). Fifthly, sending representatives to the General Assembly (Acts 14:23-27 & 16:4f & 21:18-27 cf. Hebrews 12:22f). Sixthly, administering the various decisions of the General Assembly (Acts 15:30 & 16:4f & 21:18-27). And seventhly, advising and also directing the local Sessions in matters of regional concern (Revelation 2:1 to 3:22).

As regards Synods, Calvin's comments on Acts 15:2-6 are helpful. He states:<sup>131</sup> "All the holy **Synods** have been convened from the beginning for the same purpose -- so that men who are eminent and well-versed in the Word of God might put an end to controversies..., in conformity with the will of God....

"He (Luke and Paul) then assigns a special place to the Apostles and Presbyters.... 'The Apostles and the Elders were gathered together'...who, by virtue of their Office, were legitimate judges.... The Apostles and Presbyters...were more capable judges.... Here a form and order is prescribed by God in convening **Synods**."

So too regarding **General Assemblies**. Here Calvin comments on the phrase: 'You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God..., to **the General Assembly and Church**



of the firstborn' in Hebrews 12:22-23. Remarks Calvin:<sup>132</sup> "Mount Zion...he calls...the 'heavenly Jerusalem'.... The heavenly Jerusalem...was to be built throughout the whole World..., from the east to the west."

The Westminster Assembly's *Form of Presbyterial Church Government* was an original Presbyterian Standard for all of the British Isles. It was proposed also to France by the two French delegates, and was offered also to New World because three American Theologians were invited to attend as representatives.

It still is so proposed, even today. It was also an unrescinded standard of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland in 1863, and was also highly commended by the 1967 General Assembly of Australia (see note 43 above). Here follow its wise words, all emphases being our own.

"It is...agreeable to the Word of God that the Church be governed by several sorts of assemblies, which are congregational, classical and synodical" -- alias Sessions, Presbyteries and General Assemblies." All the said assemblies have some power to dispense Church-censures.

"The Ruling Elders of a particular Congregation have power...to admonish and rebuke...(Hebrews 13:17; First Thessalonians 5:12f; Ezekiel 34:4; and)...to keep unclean persons from holy things (Leviticus 13:5 and Numbers 9:7).... The Ruling Officers of a particular Congregation have power authoritatively to suspend from the Lord's table a person not yet cast out of the Church.... When Congregations are divided and fixed, they need all mutual help one from another...

"The Scripture...hold(s) out a Presbytery in a Church. First Timothy 4:14 and Acts 15:2-6. A Presbytery consisteth of Ministers of the Word, and such other Publick Officers as are agreeable to and warranted by the Word of God to be Church-Governors (or Elders) to join with the Ministers in the government of the Church. Romans 12:7f and First Corinthians 12:28. The Scripture doth hold forth that many particular Congregations may be under one presbyterial government.... That these many Congregations were one Church, and that they were under one **presbyterial** government, appeareth. Revelation 2:1-6 and Acts 20:17-28....

"The Scripture doth hold out another sort of [General] Assemblies for the government of the Church, beside classical and congregational -- all which we call Synodical. Acts 15:2,6,22f. Pastor and Teachers and other Church-Governors (as also other fit persons when it shall be deemed expedient) are Members of those Assemblies which we call Synodical, where they have a lawful calling thereunto."<sup>133</sup>

"Synodical Assemblies may lawfully be of several sorts -- as provincial, national, and oecumenical. It is lawful and agreeable to the Word of God that there be a subordination of congregational, classical, provincial and national assemblies -- for the government of the Church" of the Lord Jesus Christ, here and now, on Earth.

Ordination is not by Congregations nor by Ministers, but by Presbyteries. Says Westminster:<sup>134</sup> "Ordination is the act of a Presbytery (First Timothy 4:14).... The power of ordering the whole work of ordination, is in the whole Presbytery.... Whether these Congregations be fixed or not fixed..., is indifferent as to the point of ordination....

"It is very requisite that no single Congregation that can conveniently associate, do assume to itself all and sole power in ordination.... There is no example in Scripture that any single Congregation which might conveniently associate, did assume to itself all and sole power in ordination....

"There is in Scripture, example of an ordination in a Presbytery over divers Congregations. As in the Church of Jerusalem, where were many Congregations. These many Congregations were under one Presbytery, and this Presbytery did ordain. The **Preaching Presbyters** orderly associated either in cities or neighbouring villages, are those to whom the imposition of hands doth appertain for those Congregations within their bounds....

"No man ought to take upon him(self) the Office of a **Minister** of the Word, without a lawful calling. John 3:27 and Romans 10:14f and Jeremiah 14:14 and Hebrews 5:4.... Ordination [of **Elders**] is always to be continued in the Church. Titus 1:5 and First Timothy 5:[17-]21f. Ordination [to the **Diaconate**] is the solemn setting apart of a person to some publick Church Office [Acts 6:3-6]....

"He that is to be ordained **Minister**, must be duly qualified.... Considered by the Presbytery, they are to proceed to enquire touching the grace of God in him and whether he be of such holiness of life as is requisite in a Minister of the Gospel; and to examine him touching his learning and sufficiency and touching the evidence of his calling to the Holy Ministry; and in particular his fair and direct calling." Hebrews 5:4 and John 3:27.

"He shall be examined touching his skill in the original tongues and his trial to be made, by reading the Hebrew and Greek Testaments.... If he be defective in them, enquiry shall be made more strictly after his other learning, and whether he hath skill in logick and philosophy...[and] what authors in divinity he hath read....

"Trial shall be made in his knowledge of the grounds of religion, and of his ability to defend the orthodox doctrine...against all unsound and erroneous opinions, especially these of the present age." And "of his skill in the sense and meaning of such places of Scripture as shall be proposed unto him, in cases of conscience and in the chronology of the Scripture and the ecclesiastical history.

"If he hath not before preached in publick with approbation of such as are able to judge, he shall at a competent time assigned (to) him expound before the Presbytery such a place of Scripture as shall be given him." See First Timothy 1:18f and 4:12-16 & 5:17-22 and Second Timothy 1:3-6 & 2:2,15,24f and 3:14f & 4:1-5.

Finally, here are some of the General Assemblies and their Presbyteries -- as either stated or implied in the Word of God. First, the General Assembly of Palestine -- with her Presbyteries of Judah, Samaria and Galilee (John 10:16 and Acts 1:13 & 8:25f & 9:31 & 11:27). Second, the General Assembly of Syria -- with her Presbyteries of Antioch, Phoenicia and Damascus (Acts 9:19f & 11:11-22f & 13:1f & 15:23). Third, the General Assembly of Cilicia -- with her various Presbyteries of Galatia, Pamphylia and Cyprus *etc.* (Acts 15:23 and First Corinthians 16:1). Fourth, the General Assembly of Greece -- with her Presbyteries of Corinth, Macedonia and Dalmatia (Acts chapters 16 to 17 and Philippians 1:1f and First and Second Thessalonians and

Second Timothy 4:10). And fifth, the General Assembly of Italy -- with her Presbyteries of Puteoli and Rome *etc.* (Acts 28:13-17f and Romans 16:3-16).

As the *Westminster Form of Church-Government* insists:<sup>135</sup> "The Church of Jerusalem...consisted of more Congregations than one (Acts 1:15 & 2:41,46f & 5:14 & 6:1,7 & 8:1 & 9:31 & 12:24 & 15:5. & 21:20).... The diversity of languages...in the second and sixth chapters of the Acts, doth argue more Congregations than one.... All those Congregations were under one presbyterial government, because they were all one Church.... The several Congregations in Jerusalem being one Church, the Elders of that Church are mentioned together for acts of government (Acts 11:30 & 15:4,6,22 & 21:17f)....

"The Scripture doth hold forth that many Congregations may be under one presbyterial government...by the instance of the Church of Ephesus (Acts 18:19,24,26 & 19:18f & 20:17,25,28-31 and First Corinthians 16:8f,19).... That there were more Congregations than one in the Church of Ephesus, appears by Acts 20:31 -- where is mention of Paul's continuance at Ephesus in preaching for the space of three years. And Acts 19:18-20, where the special effect of the Word is mentioned. And verses 10 and 17 of the same chapter, where is a distinction of Jews and Greeks. And First Corinthians 16:8-9, where is a reason of Paul's stay at Ephesus until Pentecost. And (First Corinthians 16) ver. 19, where is mention of a particular church in the house of Aquila and Priscilla then at Ephesus, as appears Acts 18:18-26.... There were many Elders over these many Congregations (Acts 20:17,25,28,20).... These many Congregations were one Church...under one presbyterial government (Revelation 2:1-6)."

To these above two Presbyteries, we ourselves would further add three more. First, the Presbytery of Corinth (First Corinthians 1:2 and Romans 16:1,16,"28"). Second, the Presbytery of Rome -- with some five small Congregations (Romans 16:3-15). And third, the model Presbytery of Asia Minor, comprising precisely seven Congregations -- with the risen Lord of the Church Himself walking in the midst of that seven-pronged 'candlestick.' Exodus 25:31-37 & 37:17-23 and First Corinthians 16:19 and Revelation 1:4-20 & 2:1,7 & 3:1,6 & 22:16.

The *Form of Church-Government* goes on: "The Scripture doth hold out another sort of assemblies for the government of the Church, beside classical [presbyterial] and congregational..., which we call Synodical (Acts 15:26,22f).... Teachers and other Church-Governors...are members of those assemblies which we call Synodical....

"Synodical assemblies may lawfully be of several sorts -- as provincial, national, and oecumenical. It is lawful and agreeable to the Word of God that there be a subordination of congregational, classical, provincial and national assemblies for the government of the Church." Acts 14:27 & 16:4-6.

"Ordination is always to be continued in the Church (Titus 1:5 and First Timothy 5:21f). Ordination is the solemn setting apart of a person to some publick Church Office (Numbers 8:11,14,19,22 and Acts 6:3-6)" -- including Deacons.

"Every Minister of the Word is to be ordained by imposition of hands...by those Preaching Presbyters to whom it doth belong (First Timothy 5:22 and Acts 14:23 & 13:3).... He is to be examined and approved by those by whom he is to be ordained (First Timothy 3:7,10 & 5:22)."

May Jehovah-Jesus Himself also today give His Presbyterian Church worldwide many bright Presbyteries -- like that seven-pronged golden candlestick! And may the several Congregations within each of His Presbyteries worldwide now see Him, our living Lord and Saviour, walking in their very midst -- in the bright and powerful presence of His Spirit with the latter's sevenfold streams all flowing from one Source! Genesis 2:10 and Isaiah 11:1-3,10-15 & 30:26-29 & 60:19f & 61:1f and Revelation 1:4f,10-20 & 2:1,7,11,17,29 & 3:6,13,22 & 4:2-10 & 5:5-14 & 19:4 & 21:10-14,23-26 & 22:-5,16f.

## **CHARACTERISTIC PRINCIPLES OF PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH GOVERNMENT**

Can a Presbyterian Congregation exist without a Session of Elders or a Diaconate? Yes,<sup>135</sup> but it shouldn't. For particularly Elders are especially important in the government of Christ's Presbyterian Church.<sup>136</sup>

Should the number of Deacons be approximately the same as the number of Elders in a Congregation? Probably; and the Elders and the Deacons should also meet together regularly in "joint session" as a united Church Council.<sup>137</sup>

What is the minimum number of Elders required to constitute a Session? Following the example of the Triune God, two Ruling Elders and one Teaching Elder -- with the Teaching Elder or the Preacher as the Moderator or Chairman.<sup>138</sup>

What is the maximum number of Elders advisable to serve on any one Session? Apparently, one tenth of the total number of families in the membership -- with one Elder per every ten families of the resident membership of the Congregation.<sup>139</sup>

Can only a regional Presbytery establish a Congregation or a Session? No<sup>140</sup> -- but once constituted by whatever means, a Congregation and/or a Session should be organically incorporated into a regional Presbytery<sup>141</sup> -- while still, of course, continuing to own and to maintain its own property locally even over against that Presbytery.<sup>142</sup>

Must a Congregation, once a member of Presbytery, obey its decisions? Yes, wherever those decisions do not conflict with Scripture -- unless that Congregation secedes from the denomination.<sup>143</sup>

Who appoints a Congregation's Elders or Deacons or Preachers? The Congregation elects them; the Session appoints them; the people approve them; and the Congregation and the Presbytery depose them.<sup>144</sup>

Should Preachers and Elders and Deacons all have their membership in the same Court of Christ's Church? No -- the distinction between the different Offices implies that Elders and Deacons are members of the local Congregation,<sup>145</sup> whereas Preachers are all members of the Presbytery of the same Church of Christ.<sup>146</sup> While both Preachers and Elders also have their membership in the same Session of the Congregation they serve.<sup>147</sup>

How many Elders of the average Congregation should be commissioned to go to the meetings of the Larger Courts (*i.e.* of the Presbytery, the Provincial Synod, and the National General Assembly)? One Ruling Elder for every one Teacher Elder or Preacher from each Congregation confederated with those Larger Courts.<sup>148</sup> The same proportional representation should be maintained on all Committees and Commissions of such Larger Courts.<sup>149</sup>

How many Congregations should be represented in each Presbytery? A minimum of three,<sup>150</sup> an average minimum of five,<sup>151</sup> an optimal or best number of seven,<sup>152</sup> and a maximum number not much greater than that.<sup>153</sup>

How many Presbyteries should constitute a Provincial Synod? As many average-sized Presbyteries as the State or geographical region or Province contains.<sup>154</sup>

How many Provincial Synods should then constitute a General Assembly? As many average-sized Provincial Synods as the nation or part of the World concerned, contains.<sup>155</sup>

Are the Ecclesiastical Courts each arranged in ever-widening Christ-centred circles, from the smaller (the Session) through the intermediate (the Presbytery and the Provincial Synod) to the larger (the General Assembly and the worldwide Church Council)? Yes, but these are not "lower" and "higher" Courts. For each is sovereign in its own sphere.<sup>156</sup>

Can one appeal a decision from a smaller to an intermediate and then to a larger Church Court, and are the decisions of the larger Courts then binding on the smaller and on the intermediate Courts? Yes, provided none of this runs counter to the clear teachings of the Holy Scriptures.<sup>157</sup>

Is this above-mentioned Presbyterian system of Church Government really to be followed by all Christians in order to please God fully today? Yes. For God's Holy Word teaches the ecclesiastical system of Special Officers (Preachers and Elders and Deacons), who serve both at the local<sup>158</sup> and at the regional<sup>159</sup> and at the national and international levels.<sup>160</sup> For there is only one body, and one Spirit, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism -- and one visible Church in which (Presbyterian) Officers and Non-Officers build themselves and one another up into the temple of God and the body of Christ.<sup>161</sup>

What is then the quorum for a meeting of the Session or Presbytery? States Rev. Professor Dr. Charles Hodge's *Church Polity*:<sup>162</sup> "Any three Ministers of a [Session or] Presbytery, being regularly convened, are a quorum competent to the transaction of all business.... A Presbytery is a number of Presbyters regularly convened.... A number of Ministers...might associate themselves together and form a Presbytery, and would according to the doctrine of Presbyterianism have the right to ordain....

"It is...not necessary to the existence of a Presbytery that Ruling Elders should constitute a portion of its Members.... The Presbyterian Church is regulated by the Bible.... The *Confession of Faith* required three Ministers in order to ordination." Hence the Presbytery of God the Father and Spirit and John the Baptizer validly met -- and then both baptized and ordained Jesus Christ. Matthew 3:13-17.

"Ordinations should never be allowed -- unless the Candidate intends to make the preaching of the Gospel his main work, and to go as an Evangelist to frontier or destitute places." This was certainly the case with Jesus, Who promised to be with His Apostles when they and their ministerial successors went forth and baptized all nations, and also (in His Spirit) to be with them until the end of the age and the World. Matthew 28:16-20.

## **THE CONGREGATIONALISTIC REV. DR. JOHN OWEN REPRESBYTERIANIZED**

Thomas Goodwin and John Owen were the most prominent Congregationalists in the world at the time of the Westminster Assembly. In fact, Goodwin was even a member thereof.

Rev. Dr. Thomas Goodwin<sup>163</sup> was educated at Cambridge, and became vicar of Holy Trinity Church. On becoming a Congregationalist in 1634, he resigned.

Forming a Congregational Church in London, Goodwin was nominated a member of the 1643<sup>f</sup> Westminster Assembly,<sup>164</sup> where he became the leader of the Dissenting Brethren in it. He was also a prominent member of the 1658 Savoy Assembly of Congregational Elders, and was much esteemed.

The 1658 *Savoy Declaration* was the first Congregationalistic statement of church polity. Most of the leading Congregationalistic Ministers, such as Thomas Goodwin and John Owen, were present there and helped formulate it.

Except for the chapters on church government, the *Savoy Declaration* is essentially the same as the *Westminster Confession*. The church polity section is clear, establishing complete autonomy for local Congregations.<sup>165</sup>

Rev. Dr. John Owen was educated at Queen's College, Oxford. He then went to his first parish in 1643 when he was a moderate Presbyterian. However, reading an American book convinced him of the Congregational way. In his next parish at Cogshall, he formed a Congregational Church, and later became one of the leading framers of the *Savoy Declaration*.<sup>166</sup>

The Preface to the *Savoy Declaration* maintains that "the differences that are between Presbyterians and Independents" are "differences between fellow-servants." Yet interestingly, chapter 26:2 of Savoy omits the reference in the *Westminster Confession's* 25:2 -- that "the visible Church...consists of all...that profess the true religion, and...their children."

Moreover, Savoy's extra thirty articles on the 'Institution of Churches' -- insist that "besides...particular churches, there is not instituted by Christ any Church [such as Presbyteries and Synods] more extensive...intrusted with power." Clearly, a Non-Presbyterian view!

Too, Preachers and Elders and Deacons and even others may all administer the Ordinances (or Sacraments). Indeed, no babies and small children "are to be admitted to the privileges of the churches who do not submit themselves to the rule of Christ" -- but any "believer...may join himself with any church for his edification." Reflecting the later Baptist view!

Churches may meet in a Synod which gives its "**advice**.... Howbeit these Synods...are **not** intrusted with any Church **Power**...to exercise any Censure...or to impose their determinations on the churches or Officers.... **There are not instituted by Christ any stated Synods**.... **Nor** are there any Synods appointed by Christ in a way of **subordination** to one another."<sup>167</sup>

However, the *Westminster Confession* 30:1-4 and 31:1-3 states that "the Lord Jesus...appointed a **government** in the hand of Church-Officers (First Timothy 5:17 and First Thessalonians 5:12 and First Corinthians 12:38).... To these Officers (plural!), the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven are committed...to shut that Kingdom against the impenitent...and to open it unto penitent sinners.... The Officers of the Church are to proceed by admonition, suspension from the Sacrament...and by excommunication from the Church (Second Thessalonians 3:6,14f and First Corinthians 5:4f,13 and Matthew 18:17 and Titus 3:10)....

"For the better government...of the Church, there ought to be such Assemblies as are commonly called **Synods** (Acts 15:2-6).... The Ministers...with other fit persons upon delegation from their churches may meet together in such Assemblies (Second Chronicles 19:8-11 & 29:1 to 30:37 and Acts 15:2-25)....

"It belongeth to **Synods**...to **determine** controversies of faith...; to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the publick worship of God and government of His Church; to receive complaints in cases of maladministration, and authoritatively to determine the same. Which decrees..., if consonant to the Word of God, are to be received with reverence and **submission** (Acts 15:15,19,24.27-31 & 16:4 and Matthew 18:17-20)."

As H.L Williams wrote in his article *Westminster versus Savoy*:<sup>168</sup> "Westminster's '**decree(s)**'...corresponds to the Greek *dogma(ta)*...in Acts 16:4 -- juxtaposed with [mere] '**advice**' given in the Savoy.... Does Scripture teach us of 'Synods' or 'Assemblies'? **Yes**. Scripture say yes, Westminster says yes -- and even Savoy admits it, though in some watered-down fashion. Does this Scriptural Synod issue **decrees** -- or **advice**? Scripture says **decree**. Westminster says **decree**, Savoy says advice.... Which Confessional Standard is therefore Scriptural?....

"Under the Savoy system," one "will find out something of what St. Paul meant when he wrote in Second Timothy 3:5 -- 'having a form of godliness' but 'denying the power thereof'.... The Presbyterian and Reformed Synodical system alone (thus) grants form and power to these Scripture-mandated Councils.... 'Let all things be done decently and in order!' (First Corinthians 14:40)....

"The above material is provocative and is a direct polemic against the style of churches that most evangelical people in England are familiar with in these modern times. Free Evangelicals, Reformed Baptists, Pentecostals, Plymouth Brethren (open), and certain various 'house-church' movements all practice in effect the provisions of the Independent creed, the original *Savoy Declaration* made in 1658."

The congregationalistic *Baptist Confession* of 1677 first appeared in London and then again in 1688 and 1689. In its chapter 26:11, it states of Ministers that "the work of preaching the Word is not so peculiarly confined to them but that others also...may and ought to perform it." And in its chapter 26:15, it is stated that though "many churches holding communion together

do...meet to consider and give their advice..., the...messengers assembled are **not** intrusted with any church **power**...or with any **jurisdiction** over the churches."

The *Baptist Confession* omits chapter 30 'Of Church Censures' and chapter 31 'Of Synods and Councils' of the *Westminster Confession*. Thus, no Presbyteries or General Assemblies! It also slightly modifies the *Westminster Confession* of 1647 and the 1658 *Savoy Declaration* to suit the Baptist views on baptism.

Thus it declares "those who do actually profess repentance...are the only proper subjects of this ordinance," and "immersion or dipping of the person in water is necessary to the due administration."<sup>168</sup> Finally, the 1833 *New Hampshire Baptist Confession* states: We believe that a visible Church of Christ is a Congregation of baptized believers.... We believe that Christian Baptism is the immersion in water of a believer."<sup>169</sup>

This represents a move away from the earlier Anabaptist position, where most adults were rebaptized by sprinkling. Yet these Baptist Confessions do not specify if their immersion is to be full submersion; or in shallow or deep water; or in hot, cold, or lukewarm water.

Or in freshwater, in saltwater, or American New Hampshire water. Or in distilled water, in chlorinated water, in recycled water, or in Dead Sea water. Nor for how long the baptizee is to remain under the water; whether his or her baptismal mode is to be unitary or triple or septuple; whether straight down perpendicularly or whether forward-leaning or whether backward-leaning; nor at what minimum age of the baptizee.

Such issues fall outside the parameters of this present writing -- but we have dealt with them elsewhere.<sup>170</sup> Too, all of the above occurred before the Arminianization of most of the world's Baptists -- the majority of whom today live in the southern part of the United States. But how many of those that so declare, are truly Christians? Indeed, there, many of the few resident Non-Baptists -- claim there are now more Baptists than people!

In England today, as the editor of the *British Reformed Journal* has stated:<sup>171</sup> "South of Berwick..., Independency has run riot.... The Evangelical witness is therefore a multiplicity of disparate assemblies.... Independency has divided, and divided, and divided.... All over England and Wales, the sad tale is repeated....

"One knows only too well the cases of 'Little Hitlers' in some Independent pulpits, or of cartels of high and mighty Deacons who rule some independent church like some kind of spiritual Mafia." Not even to speak of the myriads of congregationistic Baptist churches throughout much of the United States!

"One can remember...how in the 1940s, 50s and 60s scores of evangelical people -- all fervent believers in the 'local church' concept of the Independent style -- travelled as much as...even 50 miles to get to Westminster Chapel in London, passing by scores of 'local' churches (evangelical ones too) on their way, to attend that one (congregationistic) 'local' church [of the great Rev. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones] just around the corner from Buckingham Palace. The incongruity of this is obvious, and it fairly shouts at us that modern evangelical church government and administration is a mad *ad hoc*-ery of chaos....



"In the Presbyterian and Reformed systems, a wholly different scenario is evident. One that is truly Scriptural. We ignore matters of church government, at our peril.... We miss the import of the 'thirty thousand members' (Acts 21:17-20's triple 'tens of thousands'), besides the import of the 'house to house' worship (Acts 2:46) at Jerusalem. The one 'Church which was at Jerusalem' was one...Church consisting of many Congregations -- and therefore clearly equivalent to a Presbytery...as understood by the Reformed Churches....

"Imagine trying to organize huge numbers like that at Jerusalem, all into just one Congregation! Of course, today, in places like the Americas, this does get done -- and how! But who would dare to say that such huge gatherings can shepherd their sheep in the manner required in the Scriptures?... Surely, it is better to have a plurality of smaller Congregations in the first place -- spaced out in the city or region -- and united as one Presbytery or Classis?....

"The New Testament world was vastly different to the California of today, where you...have your 'Crystal Cathedral'.... What the New Testament gives us, is in fact a continuation of the Jewish Synagogue principle with all its system of Elders set over fifties and hundreds and so on, well established from the Old Testament Scriptures.... Chaos could have been the only result of Independency in the Apostolic period, if the many Congregations of Jerusalem and of other localities had each been regarded as churches totally independent in their own right....

"We see in the New Testament the virtues of Presbyterian...structure.... Ponder how these principles affect us in the British Isles today!.... It would place us as part of one Church."

Not the Roman-Catholic Church. But the Holy Catholic, *viz.* the Universal Christian Church of the *Apostles' Creed!*

Now back to the great seventeenth-century Congregationalists Goodwin and Owen! In their *Savoy Declaration*, they rejected not the baptism but indeed the membership of the small children of believers as belonging to the Church in chapter 25 of the *Westminster Confession* -- and also rejected the whole of chapter 31. Yet they both later re-endorsed the rôles of the larger Church Courts, such as the Synod!

Thus Goodwin then wrote:<sup>172</sup> "We acknowledge...Synods of the Elders of many churches.... The churches have **need** to refer cases of difference to them. So in case of maladministration or an unjust proceeding in the sentence of excommunication and the like, we acknowledge appeals or complaints may be made to other churches....

"The Elders of those churches met in a Synod who, being offended -- may as an ordinance of Christ **judge and declare** that sentence to be null, void, and unjust. And that not simply as any company of men may so judge, giving their judgments of a fact done -- but as an ordinance of Christ in such cases, and for that end sanctified by Him to judge and declare in matters of difference."

Dr. John Owen, after congregationalistically pastoring a Congregational Church in his own home and elsewhere for the next two decades -- at the end of his life in 1683 certainly moved back to the 1643*f Westminster Standards*, before the 1656 *Savoy Declaration* he too had written and endorsed. Indeed, he later actually seems to have re-embraced Presbyterianism.

Owen said: "Jesus Christ Himself...was He Who in times past showed Himself...to the [patriarchal] fathers.... He was that 'Angel of the Lord' with the Church in the wilderness (Acts 7:38)." Even while "the whole Mosaic ritual system was soon to pass away" -- the unchanging "Church continued."

Yet, in the Older Testament, the many Congregations all constituted but one Church. The Deacon Stephen declared of Christ, 'This is He that was in the Church in the wilderness' (Acts 7:38) – at a time when that Church could not number less than two million.

When settled in Canaan in the days of David, it numbered many millions: 'In the midst of the Church, I will sing praise to You' (Psalm 22:22-25 and Hebrews 2:12). Also in the Newer Testament, the visible Church is one -- 'one body' (First Corinthians 12:13).

According to Owen:<sup>174</sup> "For the families...of the fathers, there were...the Elders' who presided over them. These, Moses and Aaron gathered together.... These...being the Rulers of the first families, were probably in number seventy -- from when afterwards was the constitution of seventy Elders for rule. Exodus 24:1....

"There were Officers who attended the service of the whole people as to the execution of justice and order.... They are afterwards distinguished from the Elders and the Judges, Deuteronomy 16:18.... After these things, by God's appointment, was constituted the Great Court of the Sanhedrin" alias the "Session of the Highest Board of Elders."

Very remarkably, even when still a Congregationalist, the already re-presbyterianizing Owen two years before his death quite clearly wrote:<sup>175</sup> "Some there are who plead for a national Church-state arising from an association of the Officers of particular churches in several degrees, which they call classical and provincial until it extends itself unto the limits of a whole nation.... I shall neither examine nor oppose this opinion....

"Such a Church-state was constituted and appointed under the Old Testament.... Unto this Church, everyone that would please God and walk before Him -- was bound to join himself.... As the Apostle demonstrates at large in his Epistle to the Hebrews [12:22f & 13:7-17] -- all the commands...and threatenings given...unto that Church-state..., are transferred unto this of the new erection of Christ.... The commands and threatenings made...unto it as a Church, are all in full force with respect unto this new [or Newer Testament] Church state."

Owen also said:<sup>176</sup> "The rule and government of the [New Testament] Church...is in the hands of the Elders.... So [too] under the Old Testament.... Elders are the same with Rulers.... The word...is traduced to signify men in authority (*Seniores, Aldermanni*) -- in all places....

"The duty also of the whole Church...is...to put from amongst them...obstinate offenders..., that the whole Church may be preserved in...order.... Our Lord Jesus Christ gives unto his Church the power of binding and loos[en]ing -- directing...the exercise of that power."<sup>177</sup>

Here is Owen's treatment<sup>178</sup> of the Synod. "On all the solemn occasions of the Church whereunto their consent was necessary, they did of old and ought still to meet in the same place [viz. in Synods] for advice...and consent.... This is so fully expressed and exemplified in the two

great Churches [or Presbyteries] of Jerusalem and Antioch, Acts [14:23-26 and] 15[:2f], that it cannot be gainsaid....

"Churches have communion unto their mutual edification...in **Synods**.... Synods are the meetings of diverse churches...to consult and determine...such things as are of common concern.... This acting in **Synods** is an institution of Jesus Christ.... He hath thereby ordained this way of their communion in **Synods**, **no other being possible**....

"A **Synod**...may declare and determine the mind of the Holy Ghost in the Scripture and decree the observations....which are to be...observed...on the ministerial authority of the **Synod** itself.... The persons constituting the **Synod** were the Apostles [and] Elders of the Church at Jerusalem...and the Messengers [or Commissioners] of that of Antioch.... The matter in difference, was debated.... Determination was made....

"Direction is given in one particular instance as unto duty necessary.... The grounds whereon **the Synod** proposed...compliance with its decrees were...(1) that what they had determined with the mind of the Holy Ghost.... (2) The authority of the Assembly.... (3) The things...they had determined, were 'necessary'.... (4) 'Doing thus,' say they, 'ye shall do well' (Acts 15:28-29)."

Owen applied Acts 15 to the exercise of connectional ecclesiastical discipline. "On the part of **other churches**," Owen explains, "a church may...with just cause cast out...a number of their Members.... This whole order and practice are grounded on special warrant and approbation....

"The occasion there mentioned..., was guided by the Holy Ghost -- that it might be an **example** and rule for the **Churches** of Christ...in **all** ages, and so have the **force** and warranty of an **institution**.... A matter of fact wherein was some disorder, **rectified** by a practice answering the necessity of the Church, became an institution for **order** in all future ages.... The **Synod** indeed at Jerusalem had determined"!!!!"

In Hebrews 12:22f, God tells His New Testament Church that she had 'come unto **Mount Zion**...and...to the General Assembly.' Says Owen:<sup>179</sup> "We have here a blessed, yea, a glorious description of [the **Church Universal**] as the nature and communion of it are revealed under the Gospel.... 'Mount Sion, the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem' -- do **principally** respect that part of the Church which is militant.... Ephesians 1.10, 'All things are gathered into one Head in Him'..., is the sole foundation of their **mutual communion**.... We have here an Association."

Yes, the Church "militant" is indeed a widespread "association" which pinnacles in its "General Assembly." Not a self-contained congregationalistic local Congregation!

As Owen himself then continued: "'*Paneeguris*' was the solemn Assembly.... Hence is the word used for any great General Assembly.... *Ekleesia* was a 'Meeting of the Citizens' to determine...things and affairs which had had a previous deliberation in the **Senate**. Hence it is applied to signify that which we call '**the Church**' or *Qaahaal*....

"The Apostle hath respect unto the **Great Assembly** of all the [mature] males of the **Church of the Old Testament**.... The Assembly...was called 'the **Great Congregation**.' Psalm 22:25 & 25:18 & 40:9-10." Synods and General Assemblies -- here we come!

Practically throughout the 1643-49 Westminster Assembly of which he himself was **not** a member, Owen was still a Presbyterian and not yet a Congregationalist. Thus on 29th April 1646 he proclaimed to the Parliament:<sup>180</sup>

"In the very morning of the Gospel, the Sun of righteousness shone upon this land -- and they say the first potentate on the Earth that owned [or acknowledged] it, was in Britain.... God will again water His garden, once more purge His vineyard, once more of His own accord He will take England upon liking.... **I plead for Presbyterial Government in Churches!**!"

"We judge it needless to express ourselves..., unless to such as shall be so simple or malicious as to ask whether **this way be that of the Presbyterians**.... Civil divisions of men that may conveniently be **taught by one Pastor and ruled by Elders**...as **Presbyterians esteem**..., receive no injury."

Owen's later editor, W.H. Goold, was himself sympathetic to Congregationalism. So it is not surprising that Goold here says<sup>181</sup> of Owen: "There can be no doubt...that he was at this time undergoing the change of view."

According to Goold, Owen was "led...in the end to...Congregationalism." Yet according to actual fact, at the end of his life Owen seems rather to have been led back to the Presbyterianism of his earlier days.

For during his turbulent years, he had become increasingly disillusioned with Congregationalism. Hence the episcopalian Anglican Dr. Stillingfleet not inappropriately asked, after the 1660 enthronement in England of Charles II: "Hath Dr. Owen yielded, that...if **Presbytery** [rather than Episcopalianism] had been settled upon the king's restoration -- would they [Owen's Congregationalists]...have continued in their separation?"

To this, the decongregationalizing and represbyterianizing Owen made a very insightful response. He said:<sup>182</sup>

"Had the **Presbyterian Government** been settled at the king's restoration, by the encouragement and protection of the practice of it, without a rigorous imposition of everything supposed by any to belong thereunto, or a mixture of human constitutions -- if there had [been] any appearance of a schism or separation continued between the parties, **I do judge they [Congregationalism and Presbyterianism] would have been both to blame**" had they '**continued in their separation.**'

Owen's famous *Short Catechism* was published in 1667. About this, his later editor the Congregationalist Goold very truthfully wrote: "Certain principles laid down in Owen's *Catechism*, in regard to the Ruling Elder for example, are thought to bear some traces of affinity with **Presbyterianism**.... There might be ground for supposing that, on terms suggested by the *Catechism*, a coalition might be effected between the two denominations."<sup>183</sup>

Presbyterian Baxter was so impressed by words in Owen's *Catechism*, that he wrote to him **proposing union between the Congregationalists and the Presbyterians.** To that, **Dr. Owen himself replied.**<sup>184</sup>

**"I judge your proposals worthy of great consideration....** I see no reason why all the true disciples of Christ might not, upon these and the like principles, condescend in love unto **the practical concord and agreement** which not one of them dare deny to be their **duty to aim at.**"

Owen himself told<sup>185</sup> several men that he could readily join with Presbytery the way it was exercised in Scotland. Moreover, historian Wodrow [1716] records:<sup>186</sup> "Blackwell tells...he had this account of Owen at his death from persons who were with him -- that he expressed himself very much in favour of Presbyterian Government, and said he was persuaded that Presbytery was the way to God....

"Redpath told me...he visited Dr. Owen on his deathbed.... The Doctor said how he had seen his mistake as to the Independent way, and declared to him a day or two before his death that after his utmost search into the Scriptures and antiquity, he was now satisfied that **Presbytery** was the way Christ had appointed in His New Testament Church."

Owen died in 1683. One of his most important tracts, *The True Nature of a Gospel Church and its Government*, was published posthumously six years later in 1689. Rightly, the later **congregationalistic editor W.H. Gould admitted** in his own 'Prefatory Note' thereto<sup>185</sup> that because "of some statements in the following treatise..., **it has been gravely argued that the author returned to the Presbyterianism of his early days before he died.**" Indeed!

"This Communion," Owen insists in that tract,<sup>187</sup> is **incumbent** on every church with respect unto all **other** Churches of Christ in the world equally." Apparently thinking of First Corinthians 12:3-26 (especially verse 13) and Ephesians 4:1-16 (especially verse 5), Owen emphasized "that the true and **only union of all particular churches consists in that which gives form, life and being unto the Church....**

"The **Communion of churches...**is their joint actings...unto the end of their institution and being, which is the glory of Christ **in the edification of the whole...Church....** Churches have Communion unto their mutual edification by advice in Synods... **Synods are the meetings of divers churches by their [commissioned] Messengers or Delegates,** to consult and determine...such things as are of common concernment unto them all....

"None of them is or can be complete absolutely, without a **joint acting** with other Members.... **This acting in Synods is an institution of Jesus Christ.....** Having erected such a Church-state and disposed all His Churches into such **order...**unto one another as that none of them can be complete or discharge their whole **duty** without **mutual** advice and **counsel**, He hath thereby ordained this **way** of their communion in Synods -- no other being possible unto that end....

"Synods are consecrated unto the use of the churches **of all ages**, by the example of the Apostles.... Which hath the **force** of a divine institution, as being given by them under the infallible conduct of the Holy Ghost. Acts 15....

"Hence it is evident what are the ends of such **Synods** among the Churches of Christ. The general end of them all, is to promote the edification of the whole Body or Church....

"(1) To **prevent divisions** from differences in judgment and practice, which are contrary thereunto. The **first Christian Synod** was an Assembly of the first [or foremost] two Churches in the world, by their Delegates. The first Church of the Jews was at Jerusalem, and the first Church of the Gentiles was at Antioch. To prevent divisions and to preserve communion between them, was the first **Synod** celebrated. Acts 15.

"(2) To avoid or cure offences against mutual love among them. (3) To advance the light of the Gospel by a **joint confession and agreement** in the faith. (4) To give a **concurrent testimony against pernicious heresies** or error whereby the faith of any is overthrown or in danger so to be. (5) **To relieve** such by advice, as may be, by any Diotrephes unduly cast out of the Church [III John 1-10]....

"There is a threefold **power** ascribed unto **Synods**. The first is **declarative**, consisting in an **authoritative** teaching and declaring the mind of God in the Scripture. The second is **constitutive**, appointing and **ordaining** things to be believed or done and observed by and **upon its own authority**. And thirdly, **executive**, in acts of **jurisdiction towards persons and churches**....

"The **power** of a **Synod** for the execution of its decrees respects either (1) the things or **doctrine declared**...on **its authority** from the presence of Christ; or (2) persons to censure, **excommunicate** or **punish** those who receive them not.... The **authority** of a **Synod** declaring the mind of God from the Scripture in doctrine, or giving counsel as unto practice synodically unto them whose proper **representatives** are **present in it** whose **decrees** and determinations **are** to be **received** and **submitted** unto on the evidence of their **truth** and **necessity**, as recommended by the **authority** of the **Synod** from the promised **presence** of **Christ** among **them**, is suitable unto the mind of Christ and the **example given by the Apostles**. Acts 15....

"A **Synod convened in the Name of Christ**, by the voluntary consent of **several churches** concerned in **mutual communion**, may **declare** and **determine**...the mind of the Holy Ghost in the Scripture, and **decree** the observation of things true and **necessary** because revealed and appointed in the **Scripture**. Which are to be received, owned and **observed** on the evidence of the mind of the Holy Ghost in them, **and** on the ministerial authority of **the Synod itself**....

"Respect unto the causes or occasions of them, will determine what...may be necessary on such occasions to constitute a **Synod**.... That kind of Synod which some call a **Classis** [or **Presbytery**], which is a convention of Elders or Officers of sundry parochial churches...., is the constitution of...particular churches by the combination of them [all] into one....unto edification."

We now summarize Rev. Dr. John Owen's final conclusions. In his essay *Duty of Pastors and People Distinguished*, he wrote:<sup>188</sup> "The principles and rules of that church government from which...I desire not to wander, are...called **presbyterial** or **synodical** -- in opposition to prelatical or diocesan on the one side, and that which is commonly called independent or congregational on the other." Case closed!

## SOME ADVICE FROM THE HODGES ON CHURCH GOVERNMENT

According to Rev. Professor Dr. Charles Hodge's famous *Church Polity*:<sup>189</sup> "In the 31st chapter of the *Confession of Faith*, section 2, it is said '**It belongeth** to Synods and [Regional] Councils, ministerially, 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....

"Acts 16:4 – 'And as they went through the cities, they delivered unto them the **decrees** for to keep that were ordained by the Apostles and Elders which were at Jerusalem'.... This is the faith of the Church as to the **authority** of Synods....

"It is, with the exception of the comparatively small body of [Baptists and] Congregationalists, the faith of the Christian World -- and always has been. Provincial, national and oecumenical Synods have always claimed and exercised the right of making canons or ecclesiastical laws obligatory on all within their jurisdiction....

"A Session is a parochial or congregational council charged with 'the spiritual government' of a particular church.... The next highest council, is the Presbytery. It has charge of the government of the churches within a certain district. It makes rules binding on them -- as, for example, forbidding a Congregation to call or to dismiss a Pastor without its consent....

"The Synod [*cf.* a State's Assembly] is in fact a larger Presbytery.... A Synod is not called to exercise the power of licensing, ordaining, &c.... It has jurisdiction not only as an Appellate Court, but as a court of review and control....

"The General Assembly is the highest judicatory of the Presbyterian Church and 'represents in one body all the particular churches of this denomination'.... It can make no regulation infringing on the privileges of the Lower Courts.... But its power as the Supreme Court of appeals, [can] review -- and control continues....

"It is charged with 'superintending the concerns of the whole Church' and with 'suppressing schismatical contentions and disputations.... It may send missions to any part, to plant churches...and for this purpose may direct any Presbytery to ordain Evangelists or Ministers without relations to particular churches.'"

The 'Ecumenical Synods' to which Hodge above refers -- such as the 1616<sup>f</sup> international Synod of Dordt and the 1643<sup>f</sup> Westminster Assembly of England and Ireland and Scotland, may well counsel its constituent national member denominations. Yet they remain free themselves to continue their own doctrine, even where ecumenically amended – as did the 1647 Church of Scotland in respect of the *Westminster Confession* 31.<sup>190</sup>

Says Charles Hodge in his *Church Polity*:<sup>191</sup> "An overture from the Presbytery of Miami brought up the question whether Ministers should have their names enrolled as members of particular churches. This question, the Assembly answered in the negative....

"The Minister is not subject to the Session. He should not be enrolled as though he were under its authority.... The decision of the Assembly, accordant as it is with the usage of all Presbyterian Churches, will we doubt not meet with general approbation."

Charles Hodge's son, Rev. Professor A.A. Hodge, states in his book *The Confession of Faith*:<sup>192</sup> "The people have a right to a substantive part in the government of the Church.... Presbyters who labour in Word and Doctrine, are the highest permanent Officers of the Church.... The outward and Visible Church...should be..., that a small part is subject to a larger -- and a larger to the whole...."

"Christ has in fact vested all ecclesiastical power in the Church as a whole.... Yet not in the Church as a mob, but as an organized body consisting of Members, their representative Ruling Elders and Ministers.... Ruling Elders are properly the representatives of the people, chosen by them for the purpose of exercising government and discipline in conjunctions with Pastors...."

"The Church...has power to receive into fellowship and to exclude the unworthy from her own communion.... This last power is commonly styled 'the power of the keys' -- *i.e.* of opening and closing the doors of the Church, of admitting or excluding from sealing ordinances...."

"The Church Officers should...proceed in a regular order to administer discipline.... The successive stages of discipline...are (a) private admonition, (b) public admonition, (c) suspension, (d) excommunication...."

"The Church consists of Presbyters...and the people...; the people as represented by...Ruling Elders. This necessarily gives origin to the Session or Parochial Presbytery, consisting of the...Pastor and the Ruling Elders.... It admits candidates to sealing ordinances; exercises pastoral care and discipline over the members; provides for the instruction of the flock; and regulates public worship...."

"The whole Church of Christ on Earth is one in such a sense that a smaller part is subject to a larger, and a larger to the whole.... While every particular church has a right to manage its own affairs and administer its own discipline, it cannot be independent and irresponsible.... The acts of a particular church become the acts of the whole Church.... Hence, on the one hand, the right of appeal; and, on the other, the right of review and control...."

"A controversy having arisen in the church at Antioch concerning the Mosaic Law -- instead of settling it among themselves as an independent body, they referred the case to the Apostles and Elders at Jerusalem.... There it was authoritatively decided (not by the Apostles alone but 'by the Apostles and Elders with the whole Church,' Acts 15:22) -- not for that church (Antioch) only, but for all others. Paul therefore in his next missionary journey, as he passed through the cities, 'delivered to them...the **decrees** for to **keep** that were ordained by the Apostles and Elders which were at Jerusalem.' Acts 16:4...."

"The constitution of the Presbyterian Church provides for the erection and operation of a regularly graduated series of ecclesiastical councils.... Every particular Congregation is governed...by a Session or Parochial Presbytery.... There is the Classical Presbytery, which consists of all the Pastors...and the churches in a city or neighbourhood.... The churches appear



in the Presbytery by representatives from the Sessions of particular churches.... Synods are only large Presbyteries, consisting of all the Presbyteries in full of a province....

"The General Assembly of the whole Church which...consists of an equal number of Pastors and of [Elders as] the representatives of the people, of necessity is composed of the representatives of the constituent Presbyteries.... In virtue of the principle of appeal, any question originating in a Church Session or in any other subordinate Court may be carried up in succession through all the series to the General Assembly....

"In virtue of the principle of review and control, each Church Court of every grade above a Church Session has the right and is under obligation to review 'the records of the proceedings of the judicatory next below' and of course to judge of those proceedings and secure their correction when wrong.... A superior judicatory...may inaugurate investigation and apply discipline immediately, in the case of any person within its legitimate bounds....

"The power of Synods and Councils are purely ministerial and declarative.... They are therefore wholly judicial and executive, and in no instance legislative.... It belong to Synods and Councils...(1) To form creeds and confessions of faith...for...the Church. (2) To determine particular controversies of faith and cases of conscience. (3) To prescribe regulations for the public worship of God and for the government of the Church. (4) To take up and issue all cases of discipline. And, in the case of the Superior Courts, to receive appeals and complaints in all cases of maladministration in the case of individual Officers or Subordinate Courts -- and authoritatively to determine the same."

## OVERVIEW

The Trinity was always a Presbytery, before man's fall. From all eternity, that Son was always with the Father and with the eternal Spirit -- before the world was. John 17:1-5 and Hebrews 9:14.

At the beginning of time, these Three Persons all acted together, as One Presbytery, in divine harmony -- at the creation of the universe. Genesis 1:1-3. They again did so, at the formation of the human family as His righteous image. Genesis 1:26-28 & 5:1-4*f* and Ecclesiastes 7:29 and Romans 2:14*f* and Eph. 4:24-29.

That the Triune God is Himself a 'Presbytery' -- can be seen also after the incarnation, at the ordination by the Father of the Son with the Spirit at Christ's Own baptism. Isaiah 61:1*f* and Matthew 3:16*f*. After His resurrection, the divine Messiah required (and still requires) God's Triune Name to be impressed on the foreheads of His followers at their baptism by a Minister. Matthew 28:16-20 and Mark 16:14-16 and Revelation 7:2-9*f* & 22:4*f*. Then, at His human ascension, the Son returned to His Father the Ancient of days -- there to rule by His Spirit and through His Elders, here and now on Earth as too in Heaven, even unto all eternity. Daniel 7:13 & 9:25*f* and Revelation 4:4 to 5:14*f*.

The Presbytery of the Trinity still rules over man also after his fall. From Genesis 3:15*f* (*cf.* Matthew 28:16-20) -- it is obvious that the Church of this Triune God dates even from Adam

onward, very soon after his fall. So 'let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith -- "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another.... He that despised..., died without mercy, under two or three witnesses' -- Deuteronomy 17:6-9 & 19:12-15. 'How much heavier a punishment, do you think, will he deserve who has trodden under foot the Son of God -- and who has regarded the blood of the covenant with which he was sanctified as an unholy thing; and who has spited the gracious Spirit?' Hebrews 10:22-29.

All of the antediluvian Patriarchs, were themselves also Presbyters. The antediluvian *Presbuteroi* Abel, Enoch and Noah in Hebrews 11:2-7 -- were '*Seniores*.' So too was Abraham's Eliezer, Genesis 15:2 & 24:2. So too was Joseph while in prison and later over the palace and then over Egypt, Genesis 39:22 & 41:40f. So too were Joseph's Elders, and those of all the land of Egypt, Genesis 50:7. And so too were the later Elders of Israel in Egypt, even before Sinai, Exodus 3:16 & 4:29 & 12:21 & 17:5 & 18:12 & 19:7.

So too, very presbyterianly, also Psalm 105:22 speaks of the 'Princes' and 'Senators' -- cf. *Saaraayv* and *Z<sup>e</sup>qeenayv* in the original Hebrew; *Archontas* and *Presbuteros* in the 270 B.C. Greek Septuagint; and *Principes* and *Senes* in Jerome's 400 A.D. Latin Vulgate. And again, also Psalm 107:32 enjoins the Members of the Church of the Lord in all ages to 'exalt Him also in the Congregation [or the Church] of the people, and praise Him in the Assembly of the Elders.' Here, the inspired Hebrew has *bi-Q<sup>e</sup>hal 'am uu-b<sup>e</sup>-Mooshav Z<sup>e</sup>qeeniyim*; the Septuagint has *en Ekkleesia, laou kai en Kathedra, Presbuteroon*; and the Vulgate has *in Ecclesia plebis et in Cathedra Seniore*.

Moreover, and far more importantly, those very same Adamitic/Noachitic laws were enjoined also upon Gentile Christians precisely by the Christian Elders at the Synod of Jerusalem -- the First General Assembly of the apostolic Presbyterian Church. Compare: Acts 15:18-20 & 15:23-29 & 16:4-5.

Also others 'were confederate with Abram.' Genesis 14:13. Eliezer was Abram's 'Steward' or *Mesheq* or *Masek tees oikogenous* or *Procuratoris domus*. Abraham himself was 'a Prophet' alias a Minister of the Word or a Preaching Elder. Genesis 20:7. Indeed, also Eliezer of Damascus was his 'Eldest Servant.' Genesis 24:2. There, the original Hebrew has *Z<sup>e</sup>qan*; the Greek Septuagint, *Presbuteroo*; and the Vulgate, *Seniore*.

God's Presbyterian Church was under Moses even before Mount Sinai. Also back then, the Church was clearly not congregationalistic but presbyterial. Exodus 3:16f & 4:29f. The institution of the Passover involved joining or separating households, Exodus 12:4 -- and indeed precisely under the collective leadership of "the Elders of Israel." Exodus 12:21-27.

John Owen adds:<sup>193</sup> "They ate it afterwards in societies or fraternities, as our Saviour had twelve with him at the eating of it.... The Jews require ten [mature males] at least in society unto this celebration. Whence the *Targum* [or Aramaic translation] expressly on this place, Exodus 12:4 -- 'If the men of the house be fewer than the number of ten' (cf. Genesis 18:32). For this was a sacred number with them.

"Thence is their saying in *Pirke Aboth*: 'Where ten sit and learn the Law, the divine presence resteth on them' -- as Psalm 82:1." This is the Presbyterian Church's system of graded Courts -- Elders-over-ten in the Session; Elders-over-fifty in the Presbytery; Elders-over-hundred in the

next larger Court; and so on. Exodus 18:12-25 and Deuteronomy 1:13-17 & 17:6-9 and Ruth 4:2*f etc.*

Owen further explains:<sup>194</sup> "The body of the people was cast into...thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens -- all of which had their peculiar Officers or Rulers chosen from amongst themselves (Exodus 18:12-25)... The principal distributions of these planted themselves together in the cities or towns of Canaan..., [and] continued to be called by the name of the 'thousands of Israel'.... Micah 5:2."

Here, we note also the Pre-Sinaitic Ancient Britain's Presbyterial Government. Even the most rudimentary investigation of Celto-Brythonic and Anglo-Saxon ancient law and political history -- soon brings to light that the time-honoured Anglo-British practice of dividing both church and state into 'tithings' and 'fifties' and 'hundreds' *etc.*, is derived (*via* also the New Testament Church) just like that of Exodus 18:12-26*f* above -- from Old Testament Presbyterianism. Such was derived ostensibly from the earlier Eldership of Hebrews 11:2-7 and Genesis 15:2 & 24:2 & 50:7 and Exodus 3:16.

This was the pattern also in Britain, both in ancient times and during the middle ages. See the Early-Welsh *commot* or association of fifty; the *cantred* or group of hundred households; and the *pen-cenedl* or headman of the hundred. See too the Anglo-Saxon *tythings* or associations of ten commoners and *tenmannetale* or "ten men's tallies"; and the *hundredmote* or gatherings of the hundreds.

Traces of the above can still be seen even today -- *e.g.*, in the 'Chilton Hundreds' *etc.* So too the 'hundredor' jury system; the entire appeal process; and the system of graded Courts, both ecclesiastical and forensic. Deuteronomy 1:13-16 & 16:18 & 17:6-9 & 19:12-15*f* and Matthew 18:15-20 and Second Corinthians 13:1*f* and First Timothy 5:19*f; etc.*<sup>195</sup>

The importance and interrelationship of Sessions, Presbyteries and General Assemblies is seen especially when considering questions of church censures or discipline. For all sessional decisions in such matters are appealable to the broader courts of both Presbyteries and Assemblies.

'Judges and Offices shall you make, in all your city-gates...throughout your tribes.... They shall judge the people with just judgment... At the mouth of two witnesses or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death. But at the mouth of one witness, he shall not be put to death....

'If there arises a matter too hard for you in judgment...within your city-gates, then you shall arise and get yourself up into the place the Lord...shall choose.... Come...to the judge that shall...inquire.... According to the sentence of the Law which they shall teach you and according to the judgment which they shall tell you, you shall do....

'If any man hates his neighbour and lies in wait for him and rises up against him and smites him mortally so that he dies, and flees into one of these cities -- then the Elders of his city shall send and fetch him from there.... You shall put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, so that it may go well with you.... At the mouth of two witnesses or at the mouth of three witnesses, the matter shall be established....

"Both the men between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the Lord...and the judges.... The judges shall make diligent enquiry.... And those that remain, shall hear and fear.' Deuteronomy 16:18 & 17:6-11 & 19:11-20.

Elders are mentioned more than one hundred times in the Old Testament. God Himself commanded His people: 'Gather unto Me all the Elders of your Tribes...[so] that I may speak these words in their ears.' Deuteronomy 31:28. 'Solomon assembled the Elders of Israel, and all the Heads of the Tribes.' First Kings 8:1 *cf.* Second Chronicles 5:2.

'The king [Josiah] sent -- and they gathered unto him all the Elders of Judah.' Second Kings 23:1 *cf.* Second Chronicles 34:29. 'So David and the Elders of Israel and the Captains over Thousands went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord.' First Chronicles 15:25.

'David and the Elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces.' First Chronicles 21:16. 'Praise Him in the Assembly of the Elders!' Psalm 107:32. The husband of the 'virtuous woman' sits or rules 'among the Elders of the land.' Proverbs 31:10-23. 'The Elders of Judah,' records Ezekiel, 'sat before me.' Ezekiel 8:1 (*cf.* too 14:1 & 20:1). 'Call a solemn Assembly; gather the Elders!' Joel 1:14. 'Gather the people; sanctify the Congregation; assemble the Elders!' Joel 2:16. 'Let now our Rulers of all the Congregation stand..., and with them the Elders of every city!' Ezra 10:14.

However, after the exile we find the decline of the Elders. The 'Sanhedrin' or 'sitting of the Board' of Elders was one in a system of graded Courts, comprising of at least the Lesser Sanhedrin and the Greater Sanhedrin. References in the Older Testament to the roots and perhaps too even the first buddings of the then-developing Sanhedrins, include: Deuteronomy 17:6-10 & 19:11-15 and Ezra 5:5-11 & 6:7-14 & 10:8 and Nehemiah 2:16 & 4:13-21 & 7:4-7f.

References to the Sanhedrins in uninspired intertestamental Hebrew writings are found *inter alia* also in Second Maccabees 1:10 & 4:44 and Judith 4:8 & 11:14 & 15:8 and Josephus's *Antiquities* IV:8:41 -- and, in particular, in *Sanhedrin* 1:6f. References in the inspired Newer Testament to the by-then-degenerated Sanhedrins, corrupted from Hebrew Trinitarianism into Judaistic Unitarianism, are found in: Matthew 5:22 & 26:59 and Mark 15:1 and Luke 22:66 and John 11:47 and Acts 4:15 & 5:21 & 6:12 & 22:5 & 22:30.

Acts 5:21 refers to 'the Council and all the Senate of the children of Israel.' The original New Testament Greek here has to *Sunedrion kai pasan teen Gerousian toon huioon Israeel* -- where *Sunedrion* means "the sitting of the Board" and where *Gerousia* means "Senate of Elders." Jerome's Vulgate here has *Concilium* which means "Council" -- and *Seniores* which means "Senators" alias "Elders."

Also Acts 22:5 refers to 'all the estate of the Elders.' There, the New Testament Greek has *pan to Presbuteerion* alias 'the entire Presbyteriate.' The Vulgate has *omnes Majores* alias 'all of the Major [Officers].'

These Judaistic Courts had apostasized from the Trinitarianism of the Older Testament, to the later Unitarianism of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. As Dr. John Owen observes:<sup>196</sup> "The Jews, in the time of our Saviour's converse on the Earth, being fallen greatly from the faith and worship of their forefathers, and ready to sink into their last and utmost apostasy from God --

seem amongst many other truths to have much lost that of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and of the Person of the Messiah."

Yet the Older Testament Presbyterianism continued as Christian Presbyterianism. The corrupt Judaistic Sanhedrins -- as perversions of the pure Presbyterianism of the Older Testament -- were soon to be replaced by corrected Christian Courts. As Jesus remarked: 'Agree with your adversary quickly.... Lest at any time the adversary delivers you to the Judge, and the Judge delivers you to the Officer, and you be cast into prison!' Matthew 5:25.

Jesus predicted the Kingdom of God would be removed from the apostate priests 'and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.' Matthew 21:23-43. This re-form-ed nation is the Christian Church of the Newer Testament, with its Presbyterian system of graded Courts grounded in the Older Testament.

The Christian Church's system of graded Courts themselves continued and expanded those of Ancient Israel. Bypassing the corrupted Courts of apostate Judaism, they consist of: the Christian Kirk Session of Elders, which rules each local Congregation (Philippians 1:1 and First Timothy 3:1*f* and Titus 1:5*f*); the Christian Classis or *Presbuteerion* of regional Elders, which supervises the Kirk Sessions (Acts 13:1-5 & 14:23 and First Timothy 4:14); and further the Christian General Assembly as a Synod or "Meeting of the Highest Board of Elders" to which all Presbyteries may appeal. Exodus 18:12-26 and Deuteronomy 1:13-17 & 16:18 & 17:6-9 & 19:12-15 and Matthew 16:18 & 18:15-20 and Acts 14:26*f* & 15:1-41 & 16:1-5 and Hebrews 12:22*f*.

Now the first indications of this development of the Old Testament system of graded Courts into their counterparts within the New Testament Christian Church, are found in Matthew 16:19 and 18:15-20. In the former verse, Christ announces: 'I will build My Church.'

The above expression cannot mean, as Dispensationalists allege: 'I shall start building My Church' (although only after Calvary). It can only mean: 'I shall keep on building My Church' (also and especially after Calvary). For Christ had started to build His Church in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:15*f*), and had continued building it ever since (*cf.* Acts 7:38*f*).

In Matthew 16:19, the word "build" translates *oikodomeesoo* -- which here apparently means: 'I shall keep on building.' The tense is future-continuous. It suggests that the Son of God Who had been building His Church ever since 4004 B.C., would also in the future keep on building and indeed continue to expand it -- even until the very end of world history. *Cf.* Matthew 28:16-20.

Also in Matthew 18:16*f*, in cases of rebuke, Jesus taught: 'Take with you one or two (witnesses)...., so that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.... But if he [the rebuked party] neglects to hear them -- tell it to the Church!'

This passage regarding serious grievances, was addressed by Christ generally to all of 'the Disciples' alias 'those whom He had taught' (Matthew 18:1) -- and particularly to His Presbytery of the twelve 'sent-out' Apostles. John 20:21-23*cf.* Luke 22:8-30 & 24:33-48*f.* On **appeal**, after an unsuccessful private admonition, such matters were to go before at least two or three witnessing Elders or Judges -- and, if again unsuccessful, finally before special gatherings of the

whole Church (representative of the whole denomination). Deuteronomy 16:18 & 17:5-9 & 19:11-19.

For compare the words '**two or three witnesses**' in Matthew 18:16 and '**Church**' in 18:17, and '**you**' and '**ye**' [plurals] repeatedly in Matthew 18:18-19 and '**two or three**' specially '**gathered together in My Name**' in Matthew 18:20 -- with the words 'the **Elders**' and '**two witnesses...or three witnesses**' in Deuteronomy 19:12-15, and with the words '**two witnesses or three witnesses**' and '**a matter too hard for you in judgment**' and '**then you shall arise and get yourself up into the place which the Lord your God shall choose**' in Deuteronomy 17:6-9. Also note how the same words '**too hard**' in Deuteronomy 1:13-17 and the words '**hard causes**' in Exodus 18:12-26, there too presuppose such an **appeal procedure** -- from **one** set of **Elders**, to **another** set of **Elders**.

It is therefore clear that Matthew 18:15f is derived from both Deuteronomy 17:6f and 19:12f (and more remotely also from both Deuteronomy 1:13-17 and Exodus 18:12-26). However, all those texts teach **not just the rule of Elders over their own local Congregation**. They also authorize **appeals** from such a local Court to a **higher Court of similar Ruling Judges**. So too, it follows -- by good and necessary inference -- does Matthew 18:15f (*cf.* Acts 15:2 to 16:5).

After His resurrection, the Son of God urged His Ministers of the Word and Sacraments to keep on going into all the world; to disciple all nations; and to baptize them into the Name of the Triune God [the Ultimate Presbytery]. Too, then to teach them to observe **all things whatsoever** He had ever commanded (from creation onward -- **including Presbyterian Church Government**. Matthew 28:16-20 and Mark 16:15f and Luke 24:47f).

Inevitably, this would lead to the creation of many Congregations; to the formation of whole Presbyteries of Congregations; and to the convening from time to time of General Assemblies constituted from those Presbyteries (such as those of Judaea, Samaria, Galilee, Phoenicia, and Antioch, *etc.*). Acts 1:5-8 & 8:25f & 9:31 & 11:19f & 11:27f & 13:1f & 14:23f & 15:1 to 16:5.

The Presbyterian Porteus wrote:<sup>197</sup> "In several instances, there appears to have been a plurality of Congregations under the common government of associated Elders.... This view...is, a plurality of Congregations under one common government.

"At the election of Matthias (Acts 1:26), there were 120 names in **Jerusalem** (Acts 1:15).... On the Day of Pentecost, there were added to the 120, about 'three thousand souls' (Acts 2:41); and daily the Lord added to the church (Acts 2:47). The Apostles continuing to preach in the temple, 'many of them which heard the Word believed and the number of the men [excluding that of the women and the children] was about five thousand' (Acts 4:4)." Soon, it constituted 'a multitude' (Acts 4:32). "As 'many sign and wonders were wrought..., believers were the more added to the Lord -- multitudes, both of men and women' (Acts 5:12-14)."

Thereafter, 'the number of the Disciples was multiplied' (Acts 6:1). "The Word of the Lord increased, and the number of the Disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly'...(Acts 6:7).' 'The churches...throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria...were multiplied' (Acts 9:31). 'All that dwelt at Lydda and Saron...turned to the Lord,' and in 'Joppa...many believed in the Lord' (Acts 9:35,42).

"They which were scattered..., travelled as far as Phenice and Cyprus and Antioch -- preaching the Word.... A great number believed and turned unto the Lord' (Acts 11:19-21). 'There were immense multitudes of believers in Jerusalem (Acts 11:22-27).'

"The Word of God grew and multiplied. And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem' (Acts 12:24f). There, the Elders soon told Paul: 'Thou seest...how many thousands (*muriades* = tens of thousands) of Jews there are which believe!' (Acts 21:20).... There were several Congregations...at Jerusalem" -- clearly constituting a Presbytery!

Just reviewing all this, already by Acts 4:4, there were around 4000 men alone -- and hence about at least 20,000 souls altogether in the church in Jerusalem. And by Acts 6:1,7 -- the figure was probably 30,000. Yet, although each Apostle probably took charge of one-twelfth of this huge number (*cf.* Acts 6:2,4 & 8:1,14,25 & 12:2f,12,17) -- it is still likely that many of these "twelve Congregations" in the Presbytery of Jerusalem had other Ministers of the Word too assisting the Apostles (*cf.* Acts 6:8f & 6:5 *cf.* 8:1-5 & 21:8 & 9:31 & 11:27,30 & 12:2f,12,25 & 13:1,5 & 15:2,4,6).

Similarly, there were soon Presbyteries in Judaea at Joppa and Lydda (Acts 9:31-42). And in Galilee (Acts 9:31 and First Corinthians 15:6); in Samaria (John 4:39 and Acts 8:5-25 & 9:31); in Antioch in Syria (Acts 13:1-3); in Galatia (Acts 14:23f *cf.* First Corinthians 16:1f); in Cilicia (Acts 15:23); in Corinth (Romans 16:1 and First Corinthians 1:2 & 16:2f); in Macedonia (Thessalonica and Philippi); in Asia Minor (First Corinthians 16:19 and Revelation 2:1,8,12,18 *cf.* 3:1,7,14); in Rome (Romans 16:3-5,10,11,14f); and elsewhere (Colossians 1:2 & 4:13-17 *cf.* Philemon 1f).

Continues Porteus:<sup>198</sup> "It is probable that, like Jerusalem, the Antiochian church too soon developed into a whole Presbytery. *Cf.* Acts 11:19-29 & 13:1-3 & 14:23-27 & 15:2,30,35 and Galatians 2:11-14f. Next to Rome and Alexandria, Antioch was the greatest city of the then known world.... Believers came hither from Jerusalem who...'preached the Lord Jesus..., and a great number believed' (Acts 11:20-21).... 'Much people was added to the Lord' (Acts 11:22f)...., and 'the Disciples were first called Christians at Antioch' (Acts 11:25-26).... There must have been more than one Congregation at Antioch."

Of the five Prophets or Preachers mentioned in Antioch, two of them (Barnabas and Saul) were separated apparently at a Presbytery Meeting there, and sent forth as Missionary Evangelists. They then preached the Word, and created house-churches in Cyprus and in what is now Turkey. Acts 13:1-4 to 14:21.

'When they had ordained them **Elders in every church**..., they commended them to the Lord in Whom they believed.... After they had passed throughout Pisidia..., they went down into Attalia -- and thence sailed to Antioch from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. And when they were come, and had gathered [the Antiochian Presbytery of] the Church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them.' Acts 14:23-27.

There was a Presbytery also in and around Corinth. Paul started the Church there, 'and many of the Corinthians...believed.' The Holy Spirit said 'I have much people in this city' (Acts 18:8-11).

He later wrote 'to the church of God which is at Corinth..., with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ' (First Corinthians 1:2). He told them: 'God is...the Author...of peace...in all churches (plural!)'; and 'Let your women keep silence in the churches' (plural!) in First Corinthians 14:33-34. Paul speaks too of 'the church which is at Cenchrea' which was but 6 to 8 miles from Corinth (Romans 16:1). And there (First Corinthians 16:1), he also speaks of 'the churches (plural!) of Galatia' -- yet another **Presbytery!**

Also in **Ephesus**, there was a **Presbytery**. Paul writes 'I will tarry at Ephesus' in Asia Minor (First Corinthians 16:8 *cf.* Revelation 1:9 & 2:1*f*). Indeed, Paul wanted to tarry in Ephesus because 'a great and effectual door has opened to me there' (First Corinthians 16:9). Paul saluted the Ephesians, saying: 'the churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you..., with the church that is in their house' (Acts 18:18-19 and First Corinthians 16:19).

Later, 'at Ephesus...Paul persuaded...much people' (Acts 19:26). Later still, Paul remained in Ephesus for three years, 'teaching not only publicly but from house to house' (Acts 20:17,20,31). Indeed, he exhorted the Elders from Ephesus 'to take heed of all the flock and to feed the Church of God' (Acts 20:28). So, being 'a great and effectual door' with 'much' people, Ephesus certainly seemed to be -- or at least to be in -- a Presbytery (Revelation 1:11 & 2:1*f*).

**Colosse** and **Laodicea** and **Hierapolis**, in Central Asia Minor, also seem to have been in a **Presbytery**. Paul wrote 'to the saints...which are at Colosse' (Colossians 1:2). At the same time, he also wrote to them that Epaphras 'has a great zeal for you and them that are in Laodicea (20 miles to the northwest of Colosse), and them in Hierapolis (20 miles west of Colosse and 6 miles north of Laodicea)....

'Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church which is in his house! And when this epistle is read among you, cause it to be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea' (Colossians 4:13-16 and Revelation 3:14). With the church in the house of Nymphas constituting yet one more Congregation, it certainly seems that there were then at least four Congregations in that region.

Needless to say, in writing 'to all that be in **Rome**' (Romans 1:7) -- Paul was writing to a whole **Presbytery**. He says that 'the churches of the Gentiles...greet Priscilla and Aquila...[and] the church that is in their house' (Romans 16:3-5). He also greets 'them which are of Aristobulus' household' (Romans 16:10); and 'them that be of the household of Narcissus which are in the Lord' (Romans 16:11).

He further greets Epaenetus, Mary, Andronicus and Junia; Amplias, Urbane, Stachys, Apelles; Tryphena and Tryphosa; Persis, Rufus and his mother; Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes and the brethren which are with them; Philologus and Julia; Nereus and his sister and Olympas and all the saints which are with them (Romans 16:5-10 & 16:12-15). Many little house-churches, all constituting one Presbytery!

Then there is also the Elder John's 'elect lady and her children' (Second John 1:1), and 'the seven churches which are in **Asia [Minor]**.' This again points to yet one more group and possibly even two groups of churches -- each such **Presbytery** being one candlestick with seven prongs (Revelation 1:11-12 & 22:16).



There was also a **Synod** or a **General Assembly!** When 'certain men...came down from Judaea..., Paul and Barnabas [in Antioch] had no small dissension and disputation with them.' So it was 'determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain other of them should go...to the Apostles and Elders about this question' (Acts 15:1-4).

The matter was sent up by way of **reference** ore **referral** -- apparently by the regional **Presbytery of Antioch** (13:1-5 *cf.* 14:27f), and possibly also by the regional **Presbytery of Syria** and the regional **Presbytery of Cilicia** (*cf.* Acts 15:23 & 15:41). It was referred not to a mere Congregation, but to the **Apostles** and **Elders** themselves (Acts 15:2) -- in other words, to a **Synod** which 'came together' precisely to ejudicate on this. Indeed, the very word 'Synod' -- from the Greek words *sun* and *od(os)*, alias 'with' and 'road' -- means precisely a 'cross-roads' where people would gather for meetings.

After mature deliberation, the Synod wrote to all of its Congregations: 'It seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men. It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us,' thus to decide. 'It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things' (Acts 15:25,28). Consequently, the Synod sent forth its 'decrees for to keep. And so were the churches established...and increased in number daily' (Acts 16:4-5).

So when a doctrinal dispute erupted, it was determined in Antioch that Paul and Barnabas and certain other of them being brought on their way by the church, the matter was **appealed** to the Apostles and Elders of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. And when the Assembly had decided the matter, that decision was handed down to all the brethren, 'to lay [it] upon them' -- and 'through[out] the cities' to 'deliver...[to] them to keep the decrees that were ordained by the Apostles and Elders.... And so the churches were established in the Faith, and increased in number daily.' Acts 14:26f & 15:2-30 & 16:4f.

Too, especially the passage Matthew 18:15-20 ultimately involves the entire Church and all of its graded Courts. For it too declares that if a Christian's brother shall trespass against him, the offended one is first to go and tell him his fault between the two of them alone.

However, if the offender will not heed the complainant, the latter is then to take with him one or two more persons -- so that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. If the offender neglects to heed them -- this is to be told to the Church. Then, if he neglects to heed the Church -- he is thenceforth to be regarded as a heathen.

In Acts 20:17-28, Paul admonished all of the Elders in Ephesus. In Acts 21:18-25 *cf.* Galatians 2:1-9, James and the Elders in Jerusalem remind even Paul of the conclusions reached at the previous Synod -- and its binding power on Christians.

In Romans 11:16-26 and Galatians 3:16 to 4:26, Paul insists that the Christian Church was and is the heir of Ancient Israel. And in Romans 12:4-8, he upholds Presbyterial Government by Elders -- not only in Greece's Congregation at Cenchrea but also in respect of all of the tiny House-Congregations in the Presbytery of Rome (16:1-15).

For all Christians everywhere, baptized in the Name of the Triune God (as the Ultimate Presbytery) -- are obligated also to work with one another within that presbyterial system. First

Corinthians 12:3-28 & 12:13 & 16:1-8f and Ephesians 4:3f and Philippians 1:1 and Colossians 4:14f and First Timothy 3:1-8f. Thus, in First Tim. 4:14, Paul reminds Rev. Timothy to heed the prophecy given him when ordained with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery. And First Timothy 5:17-22 re-enacts the Old Testament requirements of two or three Witnesses, before rebuking an Elder.

Also the Book of Hebrews grounds New Testament Elders in the Old Testament Church. In Hebrews 7:5f, Moses was admonished by God -- when he, as the Lord's agent, was about to start constructing the tabernacle. 'For see,' God said to Moses, 'that you make all things according to the pattern shown to you on the Mount[ain]!' It was there that Moses, together with the Elders of the Older Testament's Church, waited upon the Lord. Exodus 24:1-15 & 25:40.

Christ exercised His fine ministry also through the rule of Elders in His Older Testament Church. So too, He now exercises His still more excellent ministry also through the rule of Elders in His Newer Testament Church. See Hebrews 13:7,17,24.

In Hebrews 10:23-29, Christians everywhere are urged (also today) not to neglect the gathering of themselves together -- and are warned about the testimony of two or three Elders also in Old Testament times. Deuteronomy 17:6-9. In the very next chapter (Hebrews 11:1-4f), Members of especially the New Testament Church are reminded of the faith and action of the Presbuteroi Abel and Enoch and Noah (whom also Owen regards as Seniores). Cf. Hebrews 11:1-4f with 12:1-2f & 12:6-9 & 12:22f with 13:7,17,24.

In Hebrews 12:22f, God tells His New Testament Church that she had 'come unto Mount Zion, and unto the City of the living God, [namely] the heavenly Jerusalem, and...to the General Assembly and Church of the first-born.' In so doing, the Church also comes 'to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant -- and to the blood of sprinkling, speaking better things than [that of] Abel.'

Regard is to be had unto the General Assembly of the whole people at Sinai -- in receiving the Law. Note there that the People of the Lord received that Law of God precisely through their graded Courts of Elders. Exodus 18:12-26 & 19:1-7f; & 20:1f & 21:22f & 24:4-9f.

In Hebrews 13:24, a postscript, the holy writer enjoins: "Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you." The latter phrase perhaps suggests that the Members of at least one Presbytery in Italy -- and apparently also from Italy -- were giving their fraternal and also connectional salute to Hebrew Christians under the several Presbyteries in Judaea within the General Assembly of the Church of the first-born.

In James 1:1 and 5:14f, needy Christians among all of the twelve tribes of Israel were urged to call in the Elders [plural] of the Church -- to pray for those who were sick. Too, in First Peter 1:1 & 5:1-5, those scattered throughout Pontus and Galatia and Cappadocia and Asia and Bithynia were urged to obey the Elders among them.

In First John 2:9-14, the Apostle urges his beloved Christian addressees to maintain the bond of their covenantal solidarity with all of their brethren -- be they "little children" or "fathers" or "young men" *etc.* In First John 2:19, he warns these groups not individualistically to backslide into Independency.

In Second John 1-13, that Apostle calls himself an Elder. He assures what seems to be a Presbytery or "elect lady" and her Congregations or "children" -- that "the children" also of her "elect sister" [Presbytery] greet them.

In Third John 1-11, the same Elder anticongregationalistically commends the connectional intercourse between the Congregation of Gaius on the one hand and his other brethren elsewhere on the other. Yet the Elder also reminds his addressees that he wrote unto the Church' in order to rebuke and to admonish the domineering Diotrephes.

Jude accuses such hyper-independent individualists, as having 'gone in the way of Cain' -- rather than having stayed in the good way of the Presbyter Abel (Jude 11 *cf.* Hebrews 11:2-4). He even compares them with the unruly antediluvians -- who were preached against by Presbyters like Enoch and Noah (Jude 14 *cf.* Hebrews 11:2-7 and Second Peter 2:1-5f).

Finally, Jude urges his addressees to heed the words previously spoken by the apostolic Elders (verses 17f). That would certainly include their words spoken at the Synod of Jerusalem. *Cf.* Acts 15:4f & 15:13f & 15:23f.

We ourselves would only add that once people depart into Independency from connectional Presbyteries reflecting the Triune God Himself as the Ultimate Trinity -- it is usually not very long before those Independents further lapse into at least a 'High Arianism.' That curtails the full co-importance of the Second Person, and also especially of the Third Person, within the Ultimate Presbytery of the Holy Trinity.

It also undercuts the full deity even of the First Person Himself -- by leaving Him, from all eternity, as a 'Non-Father' bereft of the filial companionship of a Co-eternal Son, and devoid of perpetual fellowship with Him in the Holy Spirit. Indeed, in the very long run, Orthodox Trinitarianism and Orthodox Presbyterianism stand or fall together.

Last, look at Presbytery and the two dozen Elders in the Triune God's Book of Revelation! In Revelation 1:10-20 & 2:1 to 3:20f, one finds a beautiful picture of Presbyterian Church Government. For there, seven different Congregations reflecting both the Oneness and the Manyess of the Triune God Himself (Revelation 1:4-6) are organically and indissolubly conjoined within the same Presbytery -- as seven different Branches of one and the same golden Candlestick. *Cf.* Exodus 25:31-40 & 37:17f.

In Revelation 4:4f (*cf.* 5:8-14), the Apostle John saw in Heaven 'four and twenty seats [or thrones], and upon the seats...four and twenty Elders sitting.' Now here, the New Testament Greek has *thronous eikosi tessaras Presbuterosus katheemenous* -- where *thronous* means "thrones" and *Presbuterosus* means "Elders" and *katheemenous* means "thoroughly seated" (alias 'in Session'). The Vulgate here has *sedilia* (which means "seats"), and *Seniores* (which means "Senators").

In Revelation 11:16f, the twenty-four "Elders...sat before God on their seats." The New Testament Greek has *Presbuteroi hoi enoopian tou Theou katheemenoi epi tous thronous autoon* -- where *Presbuteroi* means "Elders"; where *katheemenoi* means "thoroughly seated"; and *thronous* means "thrones." The Vulgate has *Seniores* (which means "Senators" alias "Elders"), and *sedent in sedibus suis* which means ("sat in their seats"). *Cf.* too also Revelation 19:4f.

In Revelation 21:12-14f (cf. 4:4-11 & 5:8-14 & 7:2-8 & 14:1 & 19:4 & 22:4), it is made plain that the names of the twelve Tribes of Israel (cf. their Provincial Assemblies) are written on the gates and foundations of the City of God called 'New Jerusalem.' So too are the names of the twelve Apostles (cf. their General Assembly or Synod)

This shows that Christ's Biblical Church is grounded in both the Older Testament represented by the twelve Patriarchs and the Newer Testament represented by the twelve Apostles. It is further reflected by the twenty-four Elders of the Presbyterian Church of all ages (B.C. 4004 till A.D. 2010f). Finally, in 22:16f (cf. 1:12-20 & 2:1 to 3:22), Jesus testifies of these things -- in all of the Congregations of His Presbyterian Church.

## CONCLUSIONS

Our conclusions regarding the Biblical Principles of Church Government in its relationship to Church Office, can now be given. It can be stated by simply giving a few quotations from noted Theologians who have studied God's Word in depth on this important subject.

Specifically as regards the (fundamental) **Office of all Believers**, the contemporary Theologian **Roscam Abbing** has rightly stated that "by holy Baptism a person is publically and visibly installed in the Office of all Believers.... All are Office-bearers in the Congregation. For all occupy the Office of all Believers by virtue of having been baptized, and all have the authority and the vocation to execute...ministries. All have received the unction of the Spirit; one is not elevated above the others; nobody may have himself called 'Rabbi'; and nobody needs to be instructed or ruled by any other (Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Hebrews 8:8-13)....

"Civic vocation should in any case be approached from the Office of all Believers.... Christian service has been seen to be threefold: (prophetic) witness, (kingly) admonition, and (priestly) assistance -- so that civic vocation too should reveal these characteristics. And certainly the grocer, the shoemaker and the engineer...are engaged in assisting and fighting against the suffering of mankind in their 'priestly' service -- without which service men would have to suffer or even to die.

"So too the teacher, the policeman, the judge...are engaged in admonition -- in their 'kingly' service of fighting against the sins of man by restructuring them. And so too the artist [and] the scientist *etc.* in their 'prophetic' service, are engaged in witnessing and fighting against falsehood. All cultural work is involved with these three services."

Concerning the relative order of importance of the General Office of all Believers as distinguished from the various Special Offices in the Church, it is to be emphasized the General Office of all Christians is of much greater importance than are the Special Offices of Preacher or of Elder or of Deacon. For, as the contemporary Theologian **Veldkamp** has pointed out:<sup>200</sup>

"The 'primacy' of the Office of all Believers appears firstly...because it has already been given in man's creation as the image of God. To be human, means to be an Office-bearer.... Therefore the Office of all Believers -- to use the old terminology (*Belgic Confession of Faith* article 28 and *Westminster Larger Confession* QQ. 42-45) -- belongs to the essence of the Church,

while the Special Offices of the Ministers of the Word and the Elders and the Deacons only belong to the welfare of the Visible Church....

"Where there is no Office of all Believers, there is no Church -- which cannot be said of the Special Offices.... The Office of all Believers also reaches out further ahead (than do the Special Offices), for it is permanent. In Heaven there are no Office-less citizens, and Office-bearing does not cease; but the Office of all Believers rather operates there in a completely perfect manner.... In Heaven there will no longer be any need for Preachers, Elders and Deacons -- but only for Prophets, Priests and Kings!"

The nature of the transition from the General Office of all Believers to the Special Offices of Preacher, Elder and Deacons is well outlined by the Theologian **J.G. Feenstra**. He says:<sup>201</sup>

"We need to struggle against imbalances, but at the same time to reckon with different nuances in connection with the Office of all Believers. There is a great variety of gifts. We have not been manufactured in a factory according to the same pattern. God works organically, and created a rich differentiation which in Christ is bound together into a unit.

"There are children of God who have received especially the gift of understanding and wisdom. For them, it is a great joy to display old and new treasures from Scripture and to meditate about the history of divine revelation. They have received the gift of teaching others and transmitting what they themselves have studied. As a consequence of their knowledge, the discussion of a subject reaches a higher level. They execute especially the prophetic Office.

"However, there are also children of God who especially possess the gift of cordial love. Through their loving labours, they win others to Christ -- and by their cordial witness in all simplicity and sincerity, they are a rich blessing to many. By means of an encouraging word, they oppose destructive criticism with their own constructive criticism. Their value too may not be underestimated. Through their faithfulness and love and their priestly labours, they form the cement whereby the building bricks are attached to one another tightly and securely.

"Then there are also those who are always prepared whenever anything needs to be done in the affairs of God's Kingdom. One can always depend on them, and they never let you down. They like to give of their time and energy in the service of the Lord. They undergird enterprises, and they are people of action. They constantly astonish with their good results. They vitalize matters, even though they sometimes need to be cautioned a little in their zeal. We need to take these different nuances into account, so that we may perceive the rich variety of gifts in Jesus."

Now these very differences in personal gifts and inclinations within the General Office of all Believers no way eliminates the necessity of having Special Offices too. To the contrary, these very personal differences form the basis of the particularization of the General Office (*via* special ordination) into the various Special Offices.

For, as **Abbing** points out,<sup>202</sup> we cannot "say that all members of the Body of the Lord are always equal to one another in every respect.... There are differences of gifts.... One is especially gifted in the Ministry of the Word; the other in the Ministry of mercy; and each is called to minister particularly in accordance with his own special gift of the Spirit Who empowers and calls unto each Ministry."

Indeed, Special Office "ordination is only to be viewed against the background of ordination to the General Office of all Believers -- namely Holy Baptism. Holy Baptism is, among other things, an installation in the Office of all Believers. We have earlier already pointed to the fact that Holy Baptism on the one hand presupposes that the Holy Spirit is present in the baptizee..., and on the other hand presupposes that the Holy Spirit is given...to the baptizee with a view to his official service. This installation in the Office of all Believers effected in Holy Baptism, remains fundamental for every later special installation in a Special Office for a Special Ministry with the promise and donation of a special grace of the Holy Spirit."<sup>203</sup>

As to the nature of the various Special Offices, the greatest Theologian of the Protestant Church -- **John Calvin** -- has remarked<sup>204</sup> that "three classes of Ministers are set before us in Scripture. So the Early Church distributed all its Ministers into three orders. For from the order of Presbyters, part were selected as Pastors-and-Teachers (or Preachers), while to the remainder (of the Elders) was committed the censure of manners and discipline." And "to the Deacons belonged the care of the poor and the dispensing of alms."

So too the great American Southern Presbyterian Theologian of the nineteenth century, **Robert Dabney**, stated the conclusion of his studies on the Special Offices in the Church as follows:<sup>205</sup> "We have proved that the churches of the New Testament knew nothing of any permanent Officers but Preachers, Presbyters, and Deacons.... God has appointed in His Church three species of functions, that of the Preacher (or the accredited public Ambassador for God), that of the Inspector (or Elder), and that of the Deacon."

Similarly, **Van Dellen and Monsma** stated<sup>206</sup> in our own twentieth century that even "the Old Testament knew three primary Offices; no more, no less -- Prophets, Priests, and Kings. They were representatives of Christ to come. For this same reason, the New Testament period has three primary Officers; no more, no less -- Ministers, Deacons, and Elders." They represent "Christ -- respectively as Prophet, Priest and King of His Church."

The prophetic Preacher is clearly one of the most important Special Officers in the Church. For, as the great Theologian **Karl Dijk** has declared:<sup>207</sup> "O child of the Lord, you would never have had any confidence or even knowledge to have come to the Father through Jesus the Son -- if Scripture (and/or its Preachers) had not told you: 'Be ye reconciled to God!' (Second Corinthians 5:21) -- and: 'him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out!' (John 6:37). 'Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved!' (Romans 10:13).... But then the Apostle goes on: 'How then shall they call on Him in Whom they have not believed?' (Romans 10:14). And -- so Paul continues in his chain of questions -- 'How shall they believe in Him, of Whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear, without a Preacher?' (Romans 10:14).

The priestly Deacon too is crucial for the well-being of Christ's Church. For, as **Abraham Kuyper Sr.** has stated,<sup>208</sup> "a Deacon occupies an Office...given him by Christ just as important as that of Preacher or as that of Elder. To say that Deacons only labour in material things and are therefore inferior to Preachers and Elders who labour in spiritual things, is to adopt a false dichotomy.... The Diaconate is the Office of Christian love, and...in Christ's Church the Diaconate must stand alongside the Presbyteriate and the (preaching) Ministry in order to exhibit the official service of divine mercy."

And the kingly Elder or Presbyter, who gives the very name to the Scriptural system of Church Government (Presbyterianism), is not only a key Officer in Scripture but an Officer who also played a major rôle in the Reformation. For as the great Reformer **Ulrich Zwingli** stated:<sup>209</sup>

"The title of Presbyter or Elder as used in Scripture, is not rightly understood by those who consider it as applicable only to those who preside in preaching. For it is evident that the term is also sometimes used to designate Elders of another kind -- that is Senators, Leaders, or Counsellors. So we read in Acts 15, where it is said, 'The Apostles and Elders came together to consider this matter.' Here we see that the Elders spoken of, are to be considered as Senators.... It is evident that the *Presbuteroi* mentioned in this place are not Ministers of the Word. They were aged, prudent and venerable men who in directing and managing the affairs of the Church were the same thing as the Senators in our cities."

As regards the interrelationship between the three Special Offices with one another and with the General Office of all Believers, we can do no better than quote the magnificent words of the esteemed Theologian **Totius**. He declared:<sup>210</sup> "The Body of Christ as revealed in the local Congregation not only has a head which thinks (the Preacher), and a hand which rules (the Elder) -- but it also has a heart which loves (the Deacon).... It is with our head and hand and heart that our inner life expresses itself. This -- through its head (Preacher), its hand (Elder), and its heart (Deacon) -- as organs installed in the body for that very purpose the Congregation exhibits its intellectual energy, its power to rule, and its vital love.

"Moreover, the most glorious interaction obtains among the three organs and the body itself. For example -- the heart needs the body, but the body too needs the heart just as much. The Deacon needs the Congregation, but the Congregation needs the Deacon too.. If the Congregation has no love, the Deacon will not be able to exhibit love. And conversely too, if there is no Diaconate, the Congregation then lacks its actual instrument of love."

Finally, in summarizing all the above, we can do no better than quote from the great Theologian **Paul of Tarsus**: "Paul and Timotheus, the Ministers of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the Elders and Deacons." Philippians 1:1.

"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.... There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God Who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is give to every man to profit withal.... All these, works that one and the selfsame Spirit -- dividing to every man severally as He will.

"For as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of that one body being many are one body -- so also is Christ. For by one Spirit, are we all baptized.... The body is not one members, but many.... But now God has set the members every one of them in the body as it has pleased Him. .... If they were all one member, where would the body be? But now there are many members, yet but one body....

"Now you are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God has set some in the Church...(as) Prophets (or Preachers).... Then..., Helps (or Deacons).... [Then] Governments (or Elders)." First Corinthians 12:1-28.

"Pursue love; and desire spiritual gifts!... God is **not** the Author of confusion!.... The things that I write unto you, are the Commandments of the Lord!.... Let all things be done decently, and in order!" First Corinthians 14:1,33,37,40.

### Endnotes

- 1) J. Calvin's *Reply to Cardinal Sadolet's Letter*, in *Tracts and Treatises*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1958, I:36.
- 2) J. Macpherson's *Presbyterianism*, Clark, Edinburgh, 1949, pp. 27f & 48.
- 3) R. Dabney's *Theories of the Eldership*, in *Discussions: Evangelical and Theological*, Banner of Truth Trust, London, 1967 rep., pp. 126f & 151.
- 4) I.A. Dorner's *History of Protestant Theology*, I:180f.
- 5) S. Miller's *Essay on the Warrant, Nature and Duties of the Office of the Ruling Elder in the Presbyterian Church*, pp. 122f.
- 6) J. Calvin's *Institutes* IV:3:8 & IV:11:1.
- 7) *First Book of Discipline of the Scottish Reformed Church*, X:4.
- 8) *Westminster Assembly's Directory of Church-Government*, Section VI.
- 9) J. Owen's *Works*, Banner of Truth, London, 1968, XV:504 & XVI:113f.
- 10) C.H. Spurgeon's *Autobiography*, 3:22.      11) Calvin's *Institutes* IV:3:15f & IV:4:14f.
- 12) *Form of Presbyterian Church Government*, in *The Subordinate Standards...of the Free Church of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1933 ed., pp. 301 & 315-20.
- 13) C. Hodge: *Church Polity*, pp. 286-94.      14) Calvin's *Institutes* IV:3:15f.
- 14) D.A. Dunkerley's *Ministers of the Word*, on p. 1614 of the 1977 *Handbook* of the Presbyterian Church in America.
- 15) Presbyterian Church in America's *Draft Minutes of the Gulf Coast Presbytery*, Jan. 13 1979.
- 16) Presbyterian Church in America's *Book of Church Order*, 1975, 18-1 & 22-7.
- 17) Ex. 18:12,21f and Num. 11:17f and Mk. 3:13f & 9:38-41 and Acts 6:1-7 and I Cor. 9:1f & 15:7-10 cf. Gal. 1:1 & 2:6.



- 18) Gen. 17:5-27 and Col. 2:11f and Acts 9:10-18 and I Cor. 7:14 and Heb. 6:2.
- 19) Ex. 12:1,4,21,26-28,48f & 19:6 and Lev. 3:2 & 8:12-26 and Lk. 2:40-47 and Acts 2:38f & 7:8,38,51 & 8:12-38 & 9:12-18 & 10:2,4,47f & 16:14f,30-34 & 18:8 and I Cor. 1:16f & 10:1-9f and Heb. 5:1 to 6:2.
- 20) See Gen. 17:1-24 & 20:7 and Ex. 4:14f & 7:1f & 12:1,21,48-50 and Dt. 33:8-10 and II Chr. 17:3-9 & 26:14-20 & 30:15-17 & 35:1-14 and Ezra 6:20 and Mt. 26:18-29 & 28:16-20 and Mk. 16:14-16 and Lk. 1:5f,59 & 2:21f & 22:14-20 and I Cor. 1:1 & 3:2 to 4:2 & 10:1-4 & 11:23f and Heb. 5:1,4,6,12f & 6:1f and I Pet. 3:15-18 and II Pet. 2:5 *etc.*
- 21) Ex. 29:7-10 and Num. 27:23 and Acts 6:3-6 & 13:1-5 and I Tim. 4:14-16 & 5:17-22.
- 22) Mt. 28:15-20 and Lk. 1:2f & 22:14-27 & 24:47f and Acts 6:2 and I Cor. 1:1 & 3:22 to 4:2 & 11:20-23 and Heb. 5:4,12f & 6:1-2.
- 23) Presbyterian Church of Australia's *Constitution and Procedure and Practice*, Board of Religious Education of the General Assembly of Australia, Melbourne, 1950, pp. 24 & 54 *cf.* 123 & 203.
- 24) I Tim. 1:8 & 4:14-16 & 5:17b-22 and II Tim. 1:6 & 4:2-5.
- 25) Rom. 12:6,11 & 16:1f and I Tim. 3:11 & 5:9f.      26) *Apostolic Constitutions*, VIII:3:19f.
- 27) *Ibid.*, II:4:26 & II:7:52 & III:2:15.2.
- 28) J. Calvin's *Comm.* on Rom. 12:4-8,13 and I Tim. 5:9; and his *Institutes* IV:3:9. Also note his female *hospitaliers* whom he appointed in the church at Geneva.
- 29) J. Calvin's *Comm. on Heb.* 5:14 to 6:2.      30) J. Calvin's *Institutes* IV:19:4,12f.
- 31) Augustine's *Concerning Baptism Against the Donatists*, III:16.
- 32) J. Calvin's *Institutes* IV:3:16.      33) J. Knox's *First Book of Discipline*, 1560, IV:3:10.
- 34) *Ibid.*, X:8:3f.      35) See our next n. below.
- 36) F.M Bradshaw's *Basic Documents on Presbyterian Polity*, Christian Education Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, Lawson N.S.W., 1984, II:2-3.
- 37) *Ibid.*, III:1,4-6.      38) *Ibid.*, IV:7,12.      39) *Ibid.*, VI:1-3f & VII:12.      40) *Ibid.*, VIII:1-3.
- 41) *Westminster Confession*, 7:5f.
- 42) *Ibid.*, 27:4 (the words in parenthesis having been added by the Presbyterian Church of Australia at its 1916 *General Assembly of Australia Minute* 70), & 28:2 & 29:3.
- 43) R. Bardon's *The Centenary History of The Presbyterian Church of Queensland*, W.R. Smith & Paterson Pty. Ltd., Brisbane, 1949, p. 31.

- 44) *Westminster Directory for the Publick Worship of God*, in *The Subordinate Standards...of the Free Church of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1933 ed., p. 295.
- 45) J.H. Thornwell's *Collected Writings*, Banner of Truth, London, 1974 rep., IV:78,95,103,115f,123-27 & 132.
- 46) *Book of Church Order*, Committee for Christian Education and Publications of the P.C.A., Montgomery, 1975, 25-5.
- 47) General Assembly of Australia's *Minute 131*, 1967.
- 48) J.A. Davies's *Papers on Ordination and Ministry*, 1992, p. 1, in the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia's *Ad hoc Theological Committee on Ordination and Ministry*, 1993.
- 49) J.A. Davies's *Ordination and Ministry*, 1992, p. 1, para. 2. 50) *Ibid.*, p. 1 para. 3.
- 51) *Ibid.*, p. 1 para. 4 to p. 5 para. 7.
- 52) *Ibid.*, p. 1 paras. 4-6 to p. 2 paras. 3 & 6 & 8 and p. 4 paras. 1,3 & 4 & 7. Pg. 3 was omitted from the copy of the Report sent to me, so that my copy from the bottom of p. 2 to the top of p. 3 incoherently reads: "Traditional patterns of leadership have increasingly not recognised as leaders ever preach...or lead in the celebration of the Lord's Dinner"!
- 53) See at nn. 34 & 37 above.
- 54) J.A. Davies's *Ordination and Ministry*, 1992, p. 5 paras. 1-3 & 7.
- 55) D. Burke's *Let the Leaders Lead and the People Minister!*, 1992, p. 1 paras. 1-3 and p. 2 paras. 1.
- 56) *Ibid.*, p. 1 para. 5 to p. 2 para. 1. & p. 2 para. 2, 4 & 5.
- 57) Secretary M. Duffield's *Report to Brisbane Presbytery re GAA Committee on Ordination and Ministry*, p. 1 paras. 2 & 4 to 7 and p. 2 paras. 1 to 3 & 5.
- 58) See M. Luther's *Collected Works*.
- 59) J. Calvin's *Opera* 23:83 & 36:83 & 37:14, and his *Institutes* III:10:6 & IV:20:4.
- 60) S. Clements for the Editorial Committee's *A Demolition of the Eldership*, in *Presbyterian Review*, Box 237, Bathurst N.S.W. 2795, Jan./Mar. 1991, p. 2.
- 61) Acts 1:15-26 and I Tim. 3:1-13 & 5:17-22.
- 62) Ex. 24:1,9,11f & 30:7f; Num. 4:1-3f,35-48 & 8:22-26 & 11:16-26 & 12:1-8 & 27:15-23; Dt. 32:44f & 34:7f; Josh. 1:11; I Kgs. 1:1,28-37 & 11:12; II Kgs. 11:1-4,12-16 & 12:20f; I Chr. 23:3,24; Acts 6:3-5 & 8:5,12,26-40 & 21:8; I Tim. 3:13.
- 63) Ex. 18:12-26. 64) Num. 4:1-3,23f,30f,35f,39f,43f,47f.

- 65) I Chr. 24:1-3,5,7f,19,31.      66) I Chr. 27:1f,4f,7f & 28:13 and II Chr. 8:14.
- 67) Lk. 1:5,8f,16.
- 68) Num. 4:4f,33,49 and I Chr. 23:3,6,13 & 25:1 to 26:32 and II Chr. 8:14 and Neh. 12:7-9.
- 69) II Kgs. 11:4-7f and I Chr. 9:14,22-25 & 24:3-31 *cf.* 25:1-8f & 26:8-14 & 27:1f. Also Lk. 1:5,8f,23 (& esp. 1:5,8 with I Chr. 24:3,5,7,10,19,31).
- 70) I Tim. 3:13 and 5:17.
- 71) J. Macpherson's *Presbyterianism*, Clark, Edinburgh, 1949, pp. 54f.
- 72) W. Capito's *Frankfurt Church Order*, 1535, as cited in J. Macpherson's *Presbyterianism*, pp. 56f.
- 73) Gen. 24:2f and Ex. 3:16 & 12:21f & 18:12-26 and Dt. 1:13-17 & 16:18f 19:12-15 and Ps. 105:14-22 & 107:32 and Ezek. 8:1 & 14:1 & 20:1-3 and I Tim. 3:1-5 and Tit. 1:5-11 and Heb. 13:7,17,24 and Jas. 5:14f and Rev. 4:4-11 & 5:8-14 & 19:4f.
- 74) *Inst.* IV:3:8.      75) *Inst.* IV:4:1.
- 76) T.N. Hanekom's *Presbyterian Church Order*, Stellenbosch, 1962, III:84.
- 77) J. Calvin's *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, 1541, in ed. P.E. Hughes's *The Register of the Company of Pastors of Geneva in the Time of Calvin*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1966, pp. 35-42.
- 78) J. Calvin's *Discipline Ecclesiastique*, sections 20 to 24.
- 79) J. Macpherson's *op. cit.*, p. 59.      80) *Ibid.*, p. 60.      81) *Ibid.*, p. 61.      82) See n. 76 above.
- 83) General Assembly of Australia's *Minutes*, Synod of the Presbyterian Church of New South Wales (on Church Offices), 1967, p. 185f, quoting the *Report of the Panel on Doctrine of the Church of Scotland*, May 1964.
- 84) M. Bradshaw's *Basic Documents on Presbyterian Polity*, Christian Education Committee, Presbyterian Church of Australia, 1984, pp. 31f.
- 85) See n. 81 above.      86) *Acta Synodi, Assembly of Emden*, art. 15.
- 87) *Book of Church Order*, art. 27.      88) T.N. Hanekom's *op. cit.*, III:85.
- 89) *First Book of Discipline*, X:8 Head 3, as cited in F.M. Bradshaw's *op. cit.*, p. 32.
- 90) *Second Book of Discipline*, VI:2 & VII:19, in F.M. Bradshaw's *op. cit.*, pp. 60 & 64.
- 91) See the *Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America*, 25-6 & 25-8 & 25-9.
- 92) Acts 1:15-26 and I Tim. 3:1-13 & 5:17-22.

- 93) Exod. 30:7*f* and Num. 4:1-3*f*,35-48 & 8:22-26 and I Kgs. 1:1,28,37 & 11:12 and II Kgs. 11:1-4,12-16 & 12:20*f* and I Chr. 23:3,24 and Acts 6:3-5 *cf.* 8:5,12,26-40 *cf.* 21:8 *cf.* I Tim. 3:13 *cf.* Ex. 24:1,9,11*f* and Num. 11:16-26 & 12:1-8 & 27:15-23 and Dt. 32:7-9,44*f* and Josh 1:1-11*f cf.* Presbyterian Church in America's *Book of Church Order*, 25-6 through 25:9.
- 94) Gen. 1:26 & 3:15 and Lk. 3:23-38 and I Cor. 15:22,45-49.
- 95) I Sam 10:1*f* & 11:14 & 13:1 & 14:13*f* & 15:24-26 & 16:1,13-22 and Mt. 1:1*f*.
- 96) II Chr. 15:8,16. 97) II Kgs. 11:1-15 and I Chr. 27:1*f*,4*f*,7 *cf.* 38:13.
- 98) Jer. 13:13*f* & 29:26*f* & 37:19 *cf.* Mk. 13:22. 99) Acts 1:15-26. 100) Acts 6:1-7.
- 101) Acts 8:9-23. 102) I Tim. 3:13. 103) I Tim. 5:17. 104) I Tim. 5:19-,22.
- 105) III John 9-11. 106) III Jh. 9-12. 107) Rev. 2:1-5. 108) Rev. 2:14-16.
- 109) Rev. 2:18-23. 110) Rev. 3:14-16.
- 111) Num. 4:4*f*,33,49 and I Chr. 23:3,6,13 & 25:1 to 26:32 and II Chr. 8:14 and Neh. 12:7-9.
- 112) II Kgs. 11:4-7*f* and I Chr. 9:14,22-25 & 24:3,5*f*,10,19,31 *cf.* 25:1,8*f* & 26:8-14 & 27:1*f* and Lk. 1:5,8*f*,23 (& esp.*cf.* I Chr. 24:3,5,7,10,19,31).
- 113) J. Macpherson's *op. cit.*, pp. 54*f*. 114) J. Macpherson's *ibid.*, pp. 56*f*.
- 115) J. Macpherson's *ibid.*, pp. 55-57. 116) T.N. Hanekom's *op. cit.*, III:84.
- 117) J. Calvin's *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, in ed. P.E. Hughes's *The Register of the Company of Pastors of Geneva in the Time of Calvin*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1966, pp. 35-42.
- 118) J. Macpherson's *op. cit.*, pp. 59.
- 119) M. Bradshaw's *Basic Documents on Presbyterian Polity*, pp. 31*f*.
- 120) *Second Book of Discipline* (1578), VI:1-9 -- in Bradshaw's *op. cit.*, pp. 60*f*.
- 121) J. Macpherson's *op. cit.*, p. 61.
- 122) J. Jansen's *Elder*, in *Christian Encyclopaedia*, 1925, IV:477; and his *Short Explanation of the Church Order*, pp. 125-129.
- 123) T.N. Hanekom's *Reformed Church Law*, D.R.C. Bookroom, Stellenbosch, 1962, III:84*f*.
- 124) *Cf.* n. 121 above; *cf.* 1967 *Minutes of General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia*, p. 186(5) para. 4.

- 125) General Assembly of Emden's *Acta Synodi*, 1671 art. 15.
- 126) Synod of Dordt's *Book of Church Order*, 1618f, art. 27.      127) See n. 123 above.
- 128) C. Hodge's *Church Polity*, Princeton, 1878, p. 285.
- 129) Presbyterian Church in America's *Book of Church Order* 25-6 & 25-8 & 25-9 and chs. 28 to 38.
- 130) A.F. Mitchell's *Keltic Church (in loco)*.      131) J. Calvin's *Comm. on Acts* 15:2.
- 132) J. Calvin's *Comm. on Heb.* 12:22.
- 133) *Subordinate Standards...of the Free Church of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1933 ed., pp. 311-14.
- 134) *Ibid.*, p. 315-17.      135) *Ibid.*, pp. 310-19.      135) Gen. 4:26 and I Kgs. 19:10,14,18.
- 136) Dt. 16:18 & 17:6,8,13 & 19:11f,15,17 & 20:5 & 21:1f,4,6,18-21 *cf.* Acts 6:1-7 & 13:14,42,48f & 14:2,8f & 14:1,8f,20-23 and Phil. 1:1 and I Tim. 3:1-13.
- 137) Lk. 22:66 and Phil. 1:1 and I Tim. 3:1-3; *Belgic Confession* art. 30; and P.C.A.'s *Book of Church Order* 10-4.
- 138) Gen. 1:1-3,26 & 125:2 & 20:7 & 24:2 and Ezek. 8:1 & 14:1 & 20:1-3 and Mt. 18:16,20 & 28:19.
- 139) Ex. 18:12,21 and Dt. 1:13-16 and I Sam. 8:4,12f.
- 140) Acts 8:1-5f & 10:1-38 & 11:19-21. See, however, n. 141 below.
- 141) Acts 8:14-25 & 9:31 & 11:1-18 & 11:22-27 & 13:1f & 14:23 *cf.* 15:23 and Rev. 1:1,11f.
- 142) Acts 12:12f & 19:9 & 20:8 & 21:8-11 & 21:18-25 & 28:14 and Rom. 16:1-16 and I Cor. 10:20-22 & 16:15,19 and I Tim. 3:15f.
- 143) *Cf.* I Kgs. chs. 11 to 13 and Acts 5:29f & 13:45-51 & 16:1-5 & 19:8-10 & 21:18,25 & 24:14.
- 144) Acts 1:15-26 & 6:1-7 & 14:23 and II Th. 3:14 and Mt. 18:15f and I Tim. 4:14 & 5:17-24 & 6:2-10,21 and the P.C.A.'s *op. cit.*, 25-5f & chs. 28 to 47.
- 145) Acts 14:23 *cf.* Phil. 1:1.      146) Acts 13:1f and I Tim. 4:14.
- 147) Acts 13:1f and I Tim. 5:17-22 and Heb. 13:7,17 and *cf.* n. 138 above.
- 148) Acts 15:2,4,6,23.      149) Acts 15:6,22.      150) Col. 1:2 & 4:15f, and see nn. 135-38 above.
- 151) Ex. 18:21 ("Rulers of fifties" represent five "Rulers of tens" or representatives of local Sessions apparently).
- 152) Rev. 1:11 to 3:22.      153) *Cf.* Ex. 18:21 and Dt. 1:13-16 *etc.*

- 154) The Synod of Palestine (John 10:16) apparently consisted of" the Presbytery of Judaea (Mt. 10:17 & Mk. 13:9 *cf.* Acts 1:13*f* & 4:4 & 5:12-16 & 6:1-7 & 8:14 & 11:27*f*; the Presbyterian of Samaria (Acts 8:25*f*,40*f*); and the Presbytery of Galilee (Acts 9:31).
- 155) On the Provincial Synods constituting the Old Testament General Assembly, *cf.* Ex. 18:21*f* and Num. 1:1-16*f* and Dt. 29:1,10 & 31:28*f* & 32:7-9 & 33:1-29 and Josh. and Mt. 5:22 & 26:59. For the New Testament General Assembly (Acts 15) -- *cf.* as its constituents: the Provincial Synod of Palestine -- with its Presbyteries of Judaea, Samaria and Galilee (see n. 154 above); the Provincial Synod of Syria (Acts 15:23) -- with its Presbyteries of Antioch and Damascus (Acts 9:19*f* & 11:22-26 & 13:1-4); the Provincial Synod of Cilicia (Acts 15:23) -- with its Presbyteries of Galatia (I Cor. 16:1), Pamphylia (Acts 13:13*f*) and also Cyprus (Acts 13:4-6). For these were all represented at the General Assembly in Jerusalem -- according to Acts 15:4,6,23 & 16:1-5.
- Note too that other Presbyteries and/or Provincial Synods were constituted after Acts 15, but apparently during New Testament times. *Cf.* the Presbytery of Corinth (Acts 18:8,10*f*,18 and Rom. 16:1,16,[28] *cf.* I Cor. 1:1*f*; the Presbytery of Macedonia (Acts chs. 16 to 17 *cf.* Phil. And I & II Th.); the Presbytery of Asia Minor (Acts 19:1,10 *cf.* 20:16-31 and I Tim. 1:3 & 4:14 and Rev. chs. 1 to 3); the Presbytery of Rome (Rom. 16:1-15); and the Provincial Synods of Greece (Acts 17:10 & 18:1*f* & 20:1*f* and Rom. 15:26); of Illyricum or Yugoslavia (Rom. 15:19); of Italy (Acts 28:13-17 and Rom. 15:24 *cf.* Heb. 13:24); and possibly even of Spain (Rom. 15:24,28).
- 156) Ex. 18:21*f* and Lk. 23:7,13,24 and John 18:13,24-31*f* and Acts 15:1 to 16:5.
- 157) Ex. 18:21-26 and Dt. 1:13-16 & 16:18 *cf.* 17:8,13 & 24:8 *cf.* II Chr. 19:5,10 and Mt. 5:22 and Acts 5:29 & 6:12 & 15:1*f* *cf.* 16:1-5 & 21:17-25 & 25:15,25.
- 158) Phil. 1:1.
- 159) Rom. 1:6-8 & 12:7*f*\* 16:1-26 and I Cor. 1:2 & 12:28 & 16:1*f*,19 and II Cor. Chs. 8 to 9.
- 160) Dt. 29 to 33 and Acts 15 and Heb. 12:22*f*.
- 161) Eph. 1:9-11,20-23 & 4:3-6,11-16 and Rev. 4:4 & 5:8-14 & 21:2,9-16,22-24.
- 162) C. Hodge's *Church Polity*, pp. 300, 306 & 315 & 342*f*.
- 163) P. Toon's *Goodwin, Thomas (1600-1680)*, in J.D. Douglas's *New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1874, pp. 422*f*.
- 164) *Subordinate Standards...of the Free Church of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1933 ed., p. 12.
- 165) B.G. Armstrong's *Savoy Declaration* (1658), in J.D. Douglas's *op. cit.*, p. 880.
- 166) P. Toon's *Owen, John (1616-1683)*, in J.D. Douglas's *op. cit.*, p. 738.
- 167) P. Schaff's *The Creeds of Christendom*, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1983 rep., III:724-28; and H.L. Williams's *Church Government Compared: Westminster and Savoy*, in *British*

*Reformed Journal*, July to Sept. 1995 p. 16, citing articles VI & XXVI-XXVII of the *Savoy Declaration*.

- 168) H.L. Williams's *Westminster vs. Savoy*, in *British Reformed Journal*, 1995:3, pp. 17-19.
- 168) P. Schaff's *op. cit.*, III:738-41. 169) *Idem*, pp.742-47.
- 170) See F.N. Lee's *Are Triune Baptisms Repeatable?*, I-II, 1990; *Baby Belief Before Baptism*, I-II, in *The Presbyterian*, Bristol,1991; *Sprinkling is Scriptural!*, in *The Presbyterian*, Bristol, 1990; and his *Anabaptists, Baptists, and their Stepchildren*, 2006; *etc.*
- 171) H.L. Williams, in J.M. Porteus's *Presbyterian and Independency, Church Government or Church Chaos?*, in *British Reformed Journal*, July to Sept. 1995, p. 3 at n. 1 and p. 14 at n. 19; and H.L. Williams, in J.M. Porteus's *Churches of a Locality*, in *British Reformed Journal*, Oct. to Dec. 1995, pp. 21-30.
- 172) Goodwin, cited in J.M. Porteus's *The Government of the Kingdom of Christ*, p. 205; in H.L. Williams's *Owen & Thomas Goodwin only Quasi-Independents?*, in *British Reformed Journal*, July to Sept. 1995, pp. 20-23.
- 173) See Dr. S. Westcott's translation of Owen's 1661 *Theologoumena Pantodapa* or *Biblical Theology*, 1994 ed., pp. 593 & 565f.
- 174) J. Owen's *Works*, Banner of Truth, London, 1968 & 1991 eds., XVII:504f.
- 175) *Ibid.*, XV:262,365f. 176) *Ibid.*, XVI:106. 177) *Ibid.*, XV:177f & XVI:154,169,230f.
- 178) *Ibid.*, XVI:46f,195-97,199,205f,207f,230f & XVII:99. 179) *Ibid.*, XXIII:328-38.
- 180) *Ibid.*, VIII:26-52. 181) *Ibid.*, VIII:2. 182) *Ibid.*, XV:432f. 183) *Ibid.*, XV:446.
- 184) *Ibid.*, I:cix-cxxi. 185) *Ibid.*, XVI:2.
- 186) Wodrow's *Analecta*, 1842 ed., 2:263 & 2:309.
- 187) *Ibid.*, XVI:183-85,189f,197f & XVI:205f. 188) *Ibid.*, XIII:39.
- 189) C. Hodge's *Church Polity*, pp. 178-80.
- 190) *The Subordinate Standards...of the Free Church of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1933, p. 18.
- 191) C. Hodge's *Church Polity*, pp. 300, 306, 315 & 342f.
- 192) A.A. Hodge: *The Confession of Faith* [1869], Banner of Truth, London, 1958, pp. 368-77.
- 193) J. Owen's *Works*, XVII:460. 194) *Ibid.*, XVII:505.
- 195) O. Flintoff's *Rise and Progress of the Laws of England and Wales*, Richards & Roworth, Bellyard, Temple-Bar, London, 1840; and W. Blackstone's 1765 *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, University Press, Chicago, 1979 rep., I-IV.

- 196) J. Owen's *Works*, II:273.
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- 200) H. Veldkamp's *The Office of Believer*, Wever, Franeker, n.d., pp. 13-15.
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- 202) *Op. cit.*, p. 523.      203) *Ibid.*, pp. 526 & 530.      204) J. Calvin's *Institutes*, IV:4:1.
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- 209) S. Miller's *Essay on the Warrant, Nature, and Duties of the office of the Ruling Elder in the Presbyterian Church*, pp. 122f.
- 210) As quoted in Booyesen's *Vocation to the Office of Deacon*, in Postma and Others' *The Ministry of Mercy: Handbook for Deacons*, Pro Rege Pubs., Potchefstroom, 1955, pp. 42f.

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