

Churches of a Locality

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Following the Editor's preface below, herewith extracts further to those published in the previous issue of our Journal, taken from the author's book "The Government of the Kingdom of Christ" published in 1872.

Editor's Preface.

What is a "locality?" And following from this, "what is a local church?" To put it in practical terms, when I was growing up in a South Wales valley town, which was the "local" church to me, out of something like twenty different congregations in that town? Was it the congregation that met at the top end of our street, or the congregation that met at the bottom end of the street, or was it the congregation in another street, but roughly level with the middle of our street, and certainly as close as the other two congregations that met at either end?

Of course, one would ask, today, "well which one of those congregations is faithful to the Scripture?" But time was when they all held to the truth. So which would have been the "local" church for me then?

And so just how can you define a "locality", and a "local church"? One can remember too, how in the 1940's, 50's, and 60's, scores of evangelical people, all fervent believers in the "local church" concept of the Independent style, travelled as much as 20, 30, and maybe 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 "local" church 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 hocery of chaos. It was a case of, I live in the "locality" of "local evangelical church A", but I do not belong to it, instead I belong to the congregation of "local evangelical church, say, D", and travel through the "localities" of "local evangelical churches B and C in order to get there! What price "local church government and order" in this kind of set up? (We take it for granted here that such travel is justified if one has no local church today that is faithful to God's Word).

So, alright, they all wanted to listen to the good "Doctor". But it must be asked, should such a great and effective preacher have been confined nearly every Sabbath to that one congregation? And is not all this to deny the very concept that they were all standing for, i.e., "Local church government," and independent from other

local churches ?

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. To do so is to slight God in his Holy Word. A church improperly organised and governed is like a ship with gaping holes down the side....doomed at the first sign of foul weather.

In 1867, Frank Vanden Berg can tell us, the Reformed Church of Amsterdam "had a total membership (men, women, and children) of about 140 000 out of the city's population of 265 000. It had 28 ministers, a general consistory (ministers, elders, and deacons) of 136, ten sanctuaries (one of them a cathedral), and four chapels." (Biography of Abraham Kuyper, Publ. originally Eerdmans 1960, and page 50). Such was the concept of "locality" in the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk. A whole city ! But one Church ! And one ruling Consistory ! And a number of congregations. A far cry this, from the evangelical chaos in our churches in Britain today ! But let us, with Bible in hand, follow the careful reasoning of James Moir Porteus. He will show us that this "Amsterdam" system is no 19th century peculiarity but rather, it followed a pattern which can be seen, if, with Porteus, one is prepared to look carefully, setting aside prejudice, in the very Word of God.

Porteus on : Churches of a Locality.

Mention is made of "the Church in Jerusalem" (Acts 11 : 22), "the Church at Antioch" (Acts 11 : 26), "the Church of God which is at Corinth" (I Cor. 1 : 2 and II Cor. 1 : 1), "the Church at Ephesus" (Rev. 2 : 1), "the Church in Smyrna" (Rev. 2 : 8), "the Church in Pergamos" (Rev. 2 : 12), and in various other places. (Editor's note ; Notice how easy it is already for our modern minds to assume that each of the above references refer to a "Westminster Chapel" concept, rather than an "Amsterdam" concept). Were these simply single congregations, or were there more than one in the same locality ? In several instances there appears to have been a plurality of congregations under the common government of associated elders, and under the title of **Church of that locality**. Let us see whether this view is confirmed by the circumstances in which the first churches were placed. If so, the fourth application of the term "Church" ("fourth application" here actually follows from three previous applications to which Porteus draws attention earlier in his book) is, a plurality of congregations under one common government.

1. Jerusalem

The first organized was "the Church which was at Jerusalem" (Acts 8 : 1; Acts 11 : 22), and doubtless, on the model there produced, other churches were formed. In that Church there were a larger number of disciples and teachers than can be conceived possible in one congregation.

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First, take the statements as to the disciples. At the election of Matthias, (Acts 1 : 26) there were 120 names in Jerusalem. (Acts 1 : 15) Paul declares that the risen Redeemer was seen in Galilee of about 500 brethren, (I Cor. 15 : 6) but these may have been gathered from various parts of Palestine, therefore they may be left out of account. On the day of Pentecost, there were added to the one hundred and twenty 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 was about five thousand" (Acts 4 : 4).

Let these numbers be put together, and it will be found that there were, at the least, eight thousand one hundred and twenty in Jerusalem. Or, let us suppose that the five thousand include the former numbers; yet we have various large numbers to add. As "many signs and wonders were wrought, believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." (Acts 5 : 12 - 14). Again, 'the Word of the Lord increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6 : 7). These multitudes, and disciples who multiplied greatly, go to augment the five thousand. But deduct them if need be, and still it must be asked, how five thousand people could be profitably organized, and assemble together regularly, to participate in divine ordinances, as one congregation, and in one place? This supposition is further confuted, when it is stated, after the dispersion by persecution, that there were still immense multitudes of believers in Jerusalem: "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands (Greek; μυριαδες *pronounce it* moo-ree-a-des = tens of thousands. See Abbott-Smith: Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament, Publ. T & T. Clark Edinburgh 1964. *Ed.*) of Jews there are which believe" (Acts 21 : 20). There were many of these still in that city; but let three, at least be supposed: here are thirty thousand believers. This statement indicates that the former numbers do not include each other, but should be added together. Where and how the former eight thousand, or these myriads, could unite together as one congregation in divine worship, is something inexplicable. The temple could not contain them. It was only used on the occasions referred to by sufferance. (It) being under the control of the Jewish priests and elders, the apostles were speedily laid hold of, and prevented preaching there in the name of Jesus. Even at the first, they not only "continued daily with one accord in the temple," they broke bread from house to house," (See Acts 2 : 46) praising God, and having favour with all the people. Until debarred, the temple was the resort for preaching to all who assembled. But those who believed met house by house for acts of worship, instruction, participation of sealing ordinances and discipline. They had no buildings such as are now designated churches or chapels. The large four-square eastern houses, with their open courts, galleries, and flat roofs, formed a fitting substitute. But none of these could accommodate the thousands of worshippers embraced in the Church at Jerusalem. Convenience of residence, vast numbers, diversity of language, and close fellow-

ship, rendered it imperative to have separate assemblies or congregations. Companies of the called breaking bread and praising God from house to house, explains the difficulty otherwise insoluble. **There were several congregations in this one Church. In other words, the churches at Jerusalem were under a common government, and thus united, were termed "the Church".** (Emph. mine Ed.)

Secondly, Preachers were numerous. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, were constantly employed. If the seventy sent forth by Christ be included, there could not be less than one hundred. But setting them aside as being probably in the country, the others cannot possibly be supposed to have been engaged in ministering to one congregation. That they were all fully employed is evident from the appointment of the seven deacons. This was in order that the ministers might give themselves continually to spiritual and public exercises. It is not improbable that some of the great company of the priests who believed might also be so engaged. That all were perpetually occupied with one congregation is inexplicable. Their number strengthens the conclusion arrived at. Several companies met house by house for the service of God, having a full supply of ministers. **Still they were one Church, having a common government.** (Emph. Ed.).

Editor's supplementary comments on the foregoing.

Again, it is necessary to assert that, so thoroughly conditioned are we today by the "Independent" notions of church government, that we can read the relevant texts in Acts and miss what Porteus has pointed out above, and without realizing it, superimpose our own mental impressions on the Scriptures, and think of the "Church which was at Jerusalem" (Acts 8 : 1; and 11 : 22) as being just one congregation, that is, one local church ! We miss the import of the "thirty thousand members" (Acts 21 : 20, "tens of thousands"), besides the import of the "house to house" worship (Acts 2 ; 46). A question now remains for the reader to ask himself : Do the scriptural facts add up here to a "Westminster Chapel" style situation, or to an "Amsterdam" style situation ? (Refer to Editor's prefatory comments.) The answer is clear and unequivocal, at Jerusalem, the one "Church which was at Jerusalem" was one local church consisting of many congregations, and therefore clearly equivalent to a **Presbytery** as understood in say, the Scots Free Kirk, or a **Classis** as understood by the Reformed Churches.

It is now necessary to follow Porteus as he examines the evidence for similar organizational structures in other localities of the New Testament Churches. One would, prima facie, at least, expect the original Jerusalem pattern to replicate itself throughout all zones of the Church's expansion.

2. Antioch.

Next to Rome and Alexandria, Antioch was the greatest city of the then known world. Here the gospel took root and spread. From this city Christians and Christianity went forth to subdue the nations of the earth. Persecuted believers came hither from Jerusalem, who "spake unto the Grecians, and preached the Lord Jesus, and the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed." (Acts 11 : 20 -21). When Barnabas was sent thither, "much people was added to the Lord" (Acts 11 ; 22 - 24). Thereafter, he and Saul "a whole year assembled themselves with the Church, and taught much people". And "the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch." (Acts 11 : 25 - 26). These expressions - "a great number", and "much people" - twice repeated, point out a very numerous body of Christians. Besides men of Cyprus and Cyrene (Acts 11 : 20), Barnabas and Saul, prophets and other teachers, were all labouring there, and with marked results of their several and united labours. The term "Christian", there first bestowed, implies that believers abounded. From that great work of God, the presence of so many eminent servants, and that amongst a numerous body of Christians, the inference seems fairly warrantable that there must have been more than one congregation at Antioch. Still, they were **one Church**. When the famine, predicted by prophets, came, the relief sent to the suffering brethren in Judea went from a united body. Though not to the same extent, the same elements are here as in Jerusalem. These lead to the same conclusion. The Church at Antioch must have had a plurality of congregations. These constituted one Church and therefore were under a common government.

Editor's comments.

Whilst the case for Antioch in and of itself is not so markedly clear cut as that of Jerusalem, the reader ought to judge for himself just what kind of a church structure Antioch would have had. Bearing in mind the fact of great numbers being assembled there, many preachers and extensive influence, which is the most likely, that it was an Independent style local church, or was it another "Amsterdam" style of church ? And is it not most likely that it would have been a replication of the "Jerusalem" structure ?

The total scenario thus far militates strongly against Antioch being anything other than another case of "one Church, several congregations," indeed another Presbytery or Classis.

3. Corinth

When the Apostle Paul was repressing the disorders that had broken out in the

Church at Corinth, he deals with the abuse of female preachers, and adducing the practice of all the Churches of the saints, he commands, "Let your women keep silence in the **churches**." (I Cor. 14 : 33 - 35). As in the whole of Christendom, so let silence be enforced on your women in all the churches in Corinth. These churches were not widely scattered, for these ladies were evidently at home. Further direction is given them rather to be disciples than teachers : "If they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands **at home**, for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." Silence is to be enforced (on women) in the "churches" (Notice the plural, Ed.) which is the "Church" (I Cor. 14 : 35, and notice the change from plural to singular. Ed.)

Writing from Corinth to Rome, and in the commendation of Phebe - incidentally showing how devout women may serve Christ and His Church, succouring very many - Paul speaks of "the Church which is at Cenchrea" (Rom. 16 : 1). Corinth was situated on a narrow isthmus having two ports. Cenchrea was the sea-port that lay towards Asia. It was usually embraced in the city of Corinth. (It was one of two ports for Corinth, being its eastern harbour on the coast of the Aegean Sea, and about as close to the city centre of Corinth itself as Avonmouth is to Bristol, approx. 6 or 8 miles. Ed.)

As at Jerusalem and Antioch, Corinth had a numerous body of believers, and a large supply of officers, richly furnished with spiritual endowments. For a year and six months, Paul, Silas, and Timothy, laboured there. After "many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed, and were baptized," the Holy Spirit assured the apostle, "Be not afraid,.....for I am with thee;.....I have much people in this city." (Acts 18 : 8 - 11). The supposition, "If therefore the whole Church be come together," (I Cor. 14 : 23), cannot be held to assert that there was only one congregation. The same expression might be employed regarding an assembly convened in any of our capitals, from all parts whither the Church has spread. Such general terms might be employed, although portions or representatives of the Church alone could be present.

Were there no express statements on which to found, those that declare that much people were added to the many who had believed, with the large number of teachers, would strengthen the probability, as in the case of Antioch. Here, however, the plurality of congregations in this one Church cannot be questioned. Not only was there a Church in that sea-port of Corinth, and one in the city proper, but that one is expressly divided by the pen of inspiration into a plurality. And yet that plurality was governed by one united body of elders, and was addressed as "...the Church of God which is at Corinth.." (I Cor. 1 : 2).

4. Ephesus.

Internal evidence proves that the first Epistle to the Corinthians came from

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Ephesus. Paul there writes, "I will tarry at Ephesus till Pentecost" (I Cor. 16 : 8). The appendages to the Epistles were the production of a later and corrupt age, and are consequently untrustworthy. (Here Porteus means those un-inspired footnotes found at the end of the New Testament epistles, reproduced even in at least some Trinitarian Bible Society editions of the AV. The reader may consult his AV at the end of 1 Corinthians, where it says that the epistle was written from Philippi, contra the assertion of verse 8 of I Cor. 16. "Tarry" in this verse translates the greek *επιμενω* - pronounce it "epi-men-ow", which means "to remain", or "to continue" Ed.) That epistle was not written at Philippi but at Ephesus. From thence Paul sends the salutations of Ephesian Christians to those of Corinth. In this connection he states, "The Churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the Church that is in their house" (I Cor. 16 : 19). The reason of this strong salutation is found in the fact that Aquila and Priscilla had recently come with Paul from Corinth to Ephesus (Acts 18 :18 -19). Their occupation was tent-making. They required large apartments for their business, and these, wherever they sojourned, were opened as a regular place of meeting for Christians. In their house a company of believers met together as an organized company in the name and service of the Lord. The salutation from the Church that was in their house at Ephesus, was evidently from a regular society assembling there. It was not from a religious family, which in New Testament usage is ever termed "a household" (See for example : Rom. 16 : 10, "household of Aristobulus; I Cor. 1 : 16, "household of Stephanus", also Phil. 4 : 22; and 2 Tim. 4 : 19). It could not be from stray individuals, who came once and perhaps never again. If so, the Corinthians could not tell from whom the salutation came. This, then, was one congregation, however small, in the house of these tent-makers.

But that could not be the entire Church of Ephesus, which was one of the most flourishing of apostolic times. To Ephesus, one of the chief centres of Eastern heathenism, came the Apostle Paul on his second missionary tour. On his third journey he remained three months, disputing and persuading concerning the kingdom of God. After the separation of the unbelieving Jews, he disputed daily in the school of one Tyrannus. Thus "by the space of three years" Paul "ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears; teaching not only publicly, but from house to house." (Acts 20 : 31). Ephesus was highly favoured : in addition to those already mentioned, Apollos, Timothy, Tychicus, and some twelve other gifted men, there sowed the good seed of the kingdom. It is also supposed that Ephesus was the chief residence of the Apostle John in his latter days. The seed thus sown found in Ephesus a kindly soil. Notwithstanding the most determined opposition, its roots struck deep. A large and flourishing Church was there established. The success was so great that Demetrius declared to his fellow-workmen, "Not only this our craft is in danger, but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised:" then "the whole city was filled with confusion." And no wonder; for "**this Paul persuaded and turned away much people**, saying, that they be no gods which are

made with hands" (Acts 19 : 7, 26 - 29). These statements evince - First, that the silver shrine-makers were filled with reasonable alarm, in which the population sympathized. Their idolatry was in danger of being overthrown. And secondly, That such a numerous body of believers could not fully carry out the purposes of a Church of Christ, unless organized in separate companies.

Then, it must be noted again, that in his address to the elders of the Ephesian Church at Miletus, Paul exhorted them "to take heed to all the flock, and to feed the Church of God." (Acts 20 : 28). These elders were recognized as possessing a joint-oversight in or over the whole Church. No other overseers or bishops are recognized or charged as divinely authorised to govern the Ephesian Church but these elders. How far the Ephesian Church extended is another question. The epistle of Paul, though addressed primarily "to the Saints in Ephesus" contains so little that is peculiar to that one Church, and so much that is common to all the Gentile Churches, that it is generally believed to have had a much wider range. If so, then the Ephesian Church comprehended more than the residents in the city, and of necessity there must have been several congregations as the combined "flock over which the Holy Ghost" had constituted that body of elders the governors. But leaving this question out of sight, there remains, as in former instances - First, the high probability that the Ephesian Church consisted of a plurality of congregations, from the large number of its members and teachers. And, secondly, the fact that one flourishing Church was recognised as "the Church of Ephesus" (Rev. 2 : 1), while there was another Church in a house. (I Cor. 16 : 19, the Church at the house of Aquila and Priscilla). Manifestly here a plurality of congregations constituted one Church under one administration.

5. Laodicea

One passage brings the whole matter as to this place into a focus. Writing to the Colossians, Paul exhorts, "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 that it be read also in the Church of the Laodiceans." (Col. 4 : 15 - 16). Three parties are here saluted - (1.) The Laodicean brethren; (2.) Nymphas; (3.) the Church in the house of Nymphas. The close connection of the passage shows that this Church in the house existed in Laodicea. Thus, one church or congregation, the brethren in Laodicea, is distinguished from another in the dwelling of Nymphas; and then both together are spoken of as 'the Church of the Laodiceans,' in which the Epistle to the Colossians is expressly ordered to be read. A plurality of congregations constituted that Laodicean Church.

6. Rome

Aquila and Priscilla had gone to Rome. There, as at Ephesus, they opened their dwelling for the assemblies of the company of the faithful. Possibly in these times

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of difficulty and danger, these zealous and loving ones went thither for that very end. Paul wrote of them. "to all that be in Rome," the "beloved of God." (Rom. 1 : 7). In his epistle, he sends greeting to Aquila and Priscilla, declaring that they were his "helpers in Christ Jesus, who have for my life laid down their own necks, unto whom not only I give thanks, but all the Churches of the Gentiles." Then comes the greeting to "the Church that is in their house" (Rom. 16 : 3-6). But that could only be a portion of the early Church of Rome, whose "faith was spoken of throughout the whole world." (Rom. 1 ; 8) In addition to that assembly of Christians in that dwelling, Paul sends special salutations to some twenty-four believers of note at Rome. He further salutes two households, "brethren which are with" five persons, (Rom. 16 : 14), "and all the saints which are with" other five (Rom. 16 : 15). These salutations evidently are for the members of the larger Church at Rome. Whether these brethren which were with Asyncritus, & etc., and all the saints which were with Philologus, & etc. were two distinct congregations, as is probable, the Church at Rome was at least composed of two congregations - that in the dwelling of the tent-makers (Aquila and Priscilla), and that to which these other parties were attached. If they had comprised but one fellowship, there would have been no necessity for saluting them with such distinctions. The small congregation is carefully distinguished from all the persons addressed. Thus, in Rome also, particular Churches were included in the government of one united Church.

There is, then, evidence that in various localities there were small stated assemblies of Christians in private dwellings, which were regarded as regular churches or congregations, and that these were regarded as portions of the larger body. The whole are addressed as "the Church" of that one locality, and particular directions are given to each, implying the common associated government of the eldership or presbytery. This evidence is not only highly probable, as in the case of Antioch, rising up almost to perfect certainty, as in Jerusalem, but the fact is plainly stated.

In the Churches of Corinth, Ephesus, Laodicea, and Rome, that plurality under one government is clearly and fully presented. These four instances remove any doubt as to the two former, and present the principle applicable to all the apostolic Churches, and the precedent on which all other Churches are to be organized and modelled. Apart from some such arrangement, it is impossible to escape from a feeling that these large bodies of professing Christians must have been masses of confusion and perplexity. Let us receive these plain statements of Scripture, and this feeling is completely removed. Every Church, however large in each locality, is now beheld illustrating the truth that "God is not the Author of confusion, but of peace", and that this is specially manifest "in all the Churches of the Saints." (I Cor. 14 : 33).

Editor's concluding remarks.

Porteus is right. 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 ? What effectively happens in American “mega” congregations is that a plurality of ministers constitute with lay elders a general board for organising and for pastoral care, but all this of course is nothing more than to make that one mega-congregation function as a plurality of individual presbyterial units, or in other words, like a city-wide, or region-wide presbytery of individual congregations. Practicalities of pastoral care demand it, and 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? But in other places and at other times assembly of such numbers would have been precluded by factors like : the difficulty of communicating with so many people; the problem of a place to assemble all that number; coping with persecution, the terrific costs of building and maintaining structures that would hold more than a couple of thousand people.....difficulties of transport to the one central venue.....the New Testament world was vastly different to the California of today where you can have your “Crystal Cathedral” ! In times of persecution, too, Christians had to worship where they could, when they could, how they could. We err if, when we read our New Testaments, we carry into the sacred pages the notions we have grown up with in these modern times, and allow such notions to “bend” the simple testimony of Scripture. 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. Even the two offices, that of Presbyters and Deacons, are a carry-over from the Synagogue, as also is the exclusive use of inspired Psalmody. Thus Christians are “engrafted” into the stock of Abraham. The New Testament gives us, indeed, a mode of Church government that is simple, unified, and above all practical under all circumstances whatever vicissitudes may prevail at any one time. 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. The left hand would never have known what the right hand was doing, and if much of modern independency is anything to go by, it wouldn’t have cared either !

Thus then, we see in the New Testament the virtues of Presbyterian or Classical structure, virtues that are God-given, part of His logical order of creation, virtues that represent and would further a true and Scriptural ecumenism of true believers....one faith, one hope, one baptism. The reader ought to ponder how these principles affect us in the British Isles today. This New Testament structure has an organising logic and genius that would unite those of us who are scattered across these realms with no faithful Scriptural congregations within our reach. It would place us as part of one Church, which may be one like that in Jerusalem, with a central hub of government, but many meeting places, here and there, in homes, or per-

haps hired halls, at various times and places. Indeed the notion that “church” must be a building specific for that purpose is not a New Testament requisite, though, belonging as it does, to the realm of “adiaphora”, it may in certain places and times be convenient. But God’s true Church is not hide-bound to buildings, useful and desirable though they may be. When God’s people can have a building of their own, surely it is most desirable, and represents a witness in and of itself, and manifests a pastoral concern for the proper housing and care of the congregation at worship. But where this is not possible, God’s people are still bidden to “forsake not the assembling of ourselves together” (Heb. 10 ; 25).



George Gillespie’s comments on “Presbuterion” in I Tim. 4 : 14

I have already evinced from this text, the necessity of ordination, let us now see whether it doth not also show us the right hands unto which Christ hath committed this power. The word *πρεσβυτεριον* (Pronounce it “Pres - bu - terion”, this is the greek word underlying the English word “presbytery” in the AV in this verse) is nowhere used by the Holy Ghost for the office itself, or degree of an elder; but is used in two other places in the New Testament for an assembly or council of elders: See Luke 22 : 66; Acts 22 : 5, in which places, Arius Montanus rendereth it by *senatus*. Beza, in the first of these places, retaineth the word *presbyterium* ; in the other place both his version and the Tigurine (Bible version) hath *totus seniorum ordo* ; but the Old English translation readeth the *company of elders*. However, both places are clearly meant of the company of elders, not of the office itself; for the office of elders could not meet together, as in that place of St. Luke; neither could the office of elders bear witness to Paul, as in that place of the Acts. Mr. Selden, upon *Ebraica* book 1 chapter 15, understands the word *πρεσβυτεριον* in both these places to be used by Luke for the great sanhedrim, the highest assembly of elders. Now, then, why shall we not understand the same word in I Tim 4 : 14 to be the assembly, not the office itself, of elders? The Holy Ghost never useth the word in that sense; the Septuagint never useth the word in that sense, for it useth it not at all. No Greek author that lived before Paul can be found to have used the word in that sense, for the word itself is not found in heathen writers.....wherefore I can see no sense which can agree to the text, but that which is the ordinary and known sense of the word *πρεσβυτεριον* ; that is, an assembly of elders, in which sense it is also frequently used by ancient writers...