

# FORUM : *Response*

Continued from Issue No.12

## John Owen RE-PRESBYTERIANIZED

Professor F. N. Lee

Queensland Presbyterian Theological Hall.

### The multiplication of the Presbyterian Church from Matthew 28 to Acts 6

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; to baptize them into the Name of the Triune God [the Ultimate Presbytery]; and to teach them to observe **all things whatsoever** He had ever commanded (from creation onward, **including Presbyterial Church Government**). Mt. 28:16-20; Mk. 16:15f; Lk. 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.

**This presbyterial principle** is seen very clearly even in the earliest days after Pentecost Sunday. About three thousand persons, **including infant children**, were then baptized — yet the Lord kept on adding to the **Church** daily such as should be saved. Acts 2:38-47. Soon, even in Jerusalem alone the number of just the adult male believers had climbed to about five thousand (Acts 4:4) — quite excluding also the number of their co-believing women and children. This, then, clearly required several Congregations — within at least one Presbytery — in that city alone.

Still the Jerusalem Christians kept on increasing — and rapidly came to constitute “a multitude.” Acts 4:32. Peter and the other Apostles, trained and ordained by Christ Himself, persevered — and continued labouring. Acts 5:29f. “And daily...in every house — they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.” Acts 5:42.

Thereafter, “in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, the...twelve [Apostles] called the multitude of the disciples unto them and said, ‘It

is not reason[able] that we should leave [aside the preaching of] the Word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you[r]selves for] seven men of honest report...whom we may appoint over this business! But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the Mini-str[y] of the Word.'

"And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost; and Philip"; and five others, all of whom were mentioned by name — "whom they set before the Apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. And the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." Acts 6:1-7.

Owen compares what happened here, with what occurred later at the Synod of Jerusalem in Acts 15. "The occasion there mentioned," he states (in XVI:230f), "was guided by the Holy Ghost — that it might be an example and rule for the **Churches** of **Christ** in cases of a like concernment unto them in all ages, and so have the force and warrant of an **institution**: as it was in the case that gave occasion unto Deacons, Acts vi." In that case, "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 Expansion of the Presbyterian Church from Jerusalem to Antioch.

Soon, both Deacon Stephen and Deacon Philip were appointed Evangelists — or Ministers of the Word and Sacraments ordained by Presbytery to start new works for the Church especially in the regions beyond. Acts 7:8f & 8:5 & 21:8f cf. I Tim. 1:3 & 4:14f & II Tim. 4:1-5 & Tit. 1:4-5f.

Stephen started telling the Jews that **Jesus** the promised **Messiah** is "**He** that was in the **Church** in the **wilderness**" — Who spoke to Moses when the latter was on Mount Sinai (**together** with the **Elders** of Israel). Acts 6:8-14f & 7:2f & 7:37f (cf. Ex. 18:12-26; 19:7f; 24:1-14f; Gal. 3:19f). The Evangelist Philip in turn went to Samaria, preaching and baptizing there. Acts 8:1-12.

These and other ministries led to the multiplication of new Congregations and to the creation of new Presbyteries. Soon "the Churches...throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria...were edified; and, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." Acts 9:31. "It was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord." Acts 9:42.

"They which were scattered abroad on the persecution that arose about Stephen, travelled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch — preaching the Word.... Some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which when they were come to Antioch spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord." Acts 11:19-23.

## Liaison between Jerusalem- and Antioch and the increase of Elders

With so many new Congregations in that region, this soon led to the creation of the new Presbytery of Antioch. “And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.... Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: which also they did, and sent it to the **Elders.**” Acts 11:26-30.

Note here the **connection** in the relationship between the Presbytery of Antioch, and those in Judaea. “The Word of God grew and multiplied. And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem” to Antioch. Acts 12:24f.

“Now there were in the Church that was at Antioch, certain Prophets and Teachers” — four of whom were mentioned (in addition to Saul or Paul). “As they ministered to the Lord..., the Holy Ghost said, ‘Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them!’ And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.” Compare Acts 13:1-3f. Thus commissioned as Missionary Evangelists by the Presbytery of Antioch, Revs. Saul and Barnabas preached the Word and created house-churches in Cyprus and in what is now Turkey. Acts 13:4 to 14:21.

“And when they had ordained them **Elders in every Church...**, they commend ed them to the Lord on **Whom** they believed.... After they had passed through out 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 ful filled.**

“And when they were come, and had gathered [the **Antiochian Presbytery** of] the Church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them — and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. And there they abode long time, with the disciples.” Acts 14:23-28.

## Dissension in Presbyteries led to the calling of a Synod

However, “certain men which came down from Judaea, taught the brethren and said, ‘Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved!’ When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain other of them should **go up to Jerusalem unto the Apostles and Elders about this question...** And when they were come to Jerusalem, **they were received of the Church and of the Apostles and Elders.**” Acts 15:1-4.

According to Acts 15:2f, representatives of the Presbyteries of at least Antioch and Jerusalem now met together in order to settle a very important matter — after “no small dissension and disputation” had plagued the Church. Indeed, it seems that representatives would also have been sent — from the equally-concerned Presby-

teries of Syria and Cilicia. Acts 15:23 & 15:41. For a great doctrinal controversy had arisen in the apostolic Congregations first in Judaea and later in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia — a controversy as to whether converts to Christianity from heathendom (in addition to needing to be baptized) needed also to be circumcised “after the manner of Moses.”

The matter was sent up by way of **reference** — 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 (however influential) in Jerusalem, 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  $\sigma\upsilon\nu$  and  $\omicron\delta\omicron\varsigma$  alias ‘with’ and ‘road’ — means precisely a ‘cross-roads’ where people would gather for meetings.

“**The Apostles and Elders came together for to consider this matter.**”

Acts 15:6. These **Apostles** and **Elders**, and **they alone**, came together to consider the matter. Acts 15:6. Other non-commissioned persons present, were simply observers at that Synod — such as “the multitude” in Acts 15:12 and “the whole Church” in Acts 15:22 and the “brethren” in Acts 15:23. Such observers only silently concurred in the decision made by the Synod itself.

Many Delegates to that Synod spoke up. “And, when there had been much disputing” (Acts 15:7) — Peter, Barnabas, Paul and finally James all spoke their minds (Acts 15:7-13). James referred to the Sacred Scriptures — explicitly pointing to the prediction of the internationalization of the Church in Amos 9:11f, and implicitly presupposing the ongoing obligatoriness of the provisions of the Noachic Covenant in Gen. 9:1-12. Then he recommended that the Synod write to the troubled Gentile Christians, and decree not that they should observe the Mosaic laws but indeed that they should keep the Noachic laws (derived from the Moral Law given to all men from Adam to Noah etc).. Acts 15:13-20f.

**The Synod decreed binding injunctions upon the Presbyteries and their Churches.**

“Then pleased it the **Apostles** and **Elders** with the **whole Church**, to send **chosen** men of their own company to **Antioch** with Paul and Barnabas; *namely* Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas — **Chief Men** [or  $\text{Ανδρες ηγουμενους}$  alias ‘**Ruling Men**’] among the brethren.” Acts 15:22. Thus too Owen (XXIII:420f).

“And they wrote letters by them after this manner: **The Apostles and Elders** and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in **Antioch** and **Syria** and **Cilicia**. Forasmuch as we have heard that certain [men] which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, ‘Ye must be circumcised and keep the law’ — to whom we gave no such com-

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mandment — **it seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you** with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men that have hazarded their lives for the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth.” Acts 15:23-27.

Here, the Synod then resolved to write to the Presbyteries of Antioch and Syria and Cilicia. It resolved further, also to choose Delegates and then to send those chosen Delegates to those Presbyteries. Those Delegates from the Synod would then also orally assure those Presbyterian Courts and their Congregations of the mind of the Synod anent several important matters.

The Synodical Letter then continued: “It seemed **good** to the **Holy Ghost** and to us, **to lay upon you** no greater burden than [all of] these **necessary things**; that ye **abstain** from meats offered to **idols**, and from **blood**, and from things **strangled**, and from **fornication**; from which, if ye **keep yourselves**, ye shall do **well**. Fare ye well!” Acts 15:22b-29.

Here, the Synod assured Gentile Christians in those Presbyteries that the Holy Spirit did not wish to burden them with any necessity of their being circumcised after the manner of Moses. However — and what is often overlooked — the Synod also assured those Gentile Christians that “it seemed **good** to the **Holy Ghost** and to us” that it was indeed necessary for them to observe “these **necessary things**” of God’s Moral Law, viz. : ‘thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image’; ‘thou shalt not kill!’; ‘thou shalt not commit adultery!’ etc. For that Moral Law is pre-Mosaic and indeed part and parcel of both the Adamic and the Noachic Covenants which God still enjoins all men everywhere to observe. See: Gen. 2:17f; 9:1-12; Eccl. 7:29; Hos. 6:7f; Mt. 19:17-19; Rom. 2:14f; 13:8-10; Jas. 2 :8-12.

### **The Synod’s decrees delivered to the congregations within the Presbyteries.**

The Delegates thus deputised by and from that Synod then “came to [the Presbytery of] **Antioch**: and when they had gathered the multitude together, **they delivered the epistle**: which, when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation.” Acts 15:30f.

“**And Paul chose Silas, and...went through [the Presbyteries of] Syria and Cilicia — confirming the Churches.... And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the Apostles and Elders.... And so were the Churches [alias all of the Congregations] established in the [Christian] faith, and increased in number daily.**” Acts 15:40 to 16:5.

Here, it should be noted that the word “**decrees**” translates the Greek word *δογματα*. [dogmata]. This means ‘**enacted laws**.’ It clearly shows that those enactments of the Synod were not merely advisory but indeed actually **obligatory** for the Christians in all of the Congregations within the several Presbyteries here addressed.

As Owen himself observes (XVI:46f) — “The brethren of the Church may be so multiplied as that the constant meeting of them all in one place may not be absolutely best for their edification; howbeit, that 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 **such Synods**], for **advice [and] consultation and consent**.... This is so fully expressed and exemplified in the **two great Churches** [or presbyteries!] of Jerusalem and Antioch, Acts xv, **that it cannot be gainsaid.**”

Elsewhere too, Owen explains (XVII:99): “The **Synod** indeed at Jerusalem had **determined** [!!!] that the *yoke of the law* [of the Israelites] should not be put upon the necks of the Gentile converts. Acts xv.”

### Dr. Owen’s most extended treatment on the Synod of Jerusalem [Acts 15]

Here is Owen’s most extended treatment of the Synod of Jerusalem in Acts 15. “(1) The *occasion* of it,” he explains (XVI:207f), “was a **difference in the Church of Antioch**, which they could not compose among themselves because those who caused the difference pretended authority from the Apostles — as is evident; vers- es 1,24.

“(2) *The means of its convention* was the... **reference** of the matter in debate made by the Church at Antioch....

“(3) **The persons constituting the Synod** were the Apostles, **Elders**, and brethren of the Church at Jerusalem **and the Messengers** [or **Commissioners**] of that of Antioch with whom Paul and Barnabas were joined in the same **Delegation**.

“(4) the *matter* in difference was **debated** as unto the mind of God concerning it in the *Scripture*, and out of the *Scripture*. On James’ proposal, the **determination** was made.

“(5) There was *nothing imposed anew* on the practice of the Churches.... **Direction** is given in one particular instance as unto **duty necessary** on many accounts unto the Gentile converts — namely to **abstain from fornication**” etc.

“(6) The *grounds* whereon the Synod proposed the reception of and compliance with its decrees were four — [1] That what they had determined was the **mind of the Holy Ghost** [Acts 15:28a].... [2] The **authority** of the Assembly, as convened in the name of **Christ** and by virtue of his presence.... ‘It pleased the Holy Ghost **and us**’ [Acts 15:28b].... [3] That the things which they had determined were ‘necessary’ [Acts 15:28c & 15:29a].... [4] From the duty with respect unto the peace and **mutual communion** of the Jewish and Gentiles Churches: ‘Doing thus,’ say they, ‘ye shall **do well**’ [Acts 15:29b].”

### Owen’s great Discourse Concerning the Administration of Church-Censures

In Owen’s *Discourse Concerning the Administration of Church-Censures*, he applies Acts 15 to the exercise of **connectional** ecclesiastical discipline. “On the

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part of **other Churches**,” Owen there explains (XVI:230f), “a Church may either causelessly or...with just cause, cast out or withdraw communion from...a number of their Members.... This whole order and practice are grounded on especial warrant and approbation, recorded Acts xv....

“The occasion there mentioned, fell out in the providence of God....

The practice upon it, was guided by the Holy Ghost — that it might be an **example** and **rule** for the **Churches** of Christ in cases of a like concernment unto them in **all** ages, and so have the **force** and warranty of an institution: as it was in the case that gave occasion unto Deacons, Acts vi.” In that case, “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.”

At the later Jerusalem General Assembly (Acts 15), “in that **Synod**...the truth was searched out and the mind of the Holy Ghost searched into by reasonings...and the consideration of Scripture testimonies whereby they were guided in their conclusion and determination... That wherein many Churches are concerned...should be considered, advised upon and **determined** by **more Churches** holding communion together and **meeting for that purpose by their Messengers**” alias their **Commissioners**. “To deny an institution of so great necessity to the peace and edification of the Churches — will give great countenance unto men who, supposing such defects, are ready to supply them with their own inventions.” What a good description of the “inventions” of ‘Independency’!

### Presbytery Elders in the Christian Courts at Ephesus, Rome, and Crete.

In Acts 20:17-28, Paul admonished all of the Elders in Ephesus. In Acts 21:18-25 cf. Gal. 2:1-9, James and the Elders in Jerusalem reminded even Paul of the conclusions reached at the previous Synod and its binding power on Christians. In Rom. 11:16-26 and Gal. 3:16 to 4:26, Paul insists that the Christian Church was and is the heir of Ancient Israel. And in Rom. 12:4-8, he upholds Presbyterial Government by Elders — not only in Greece’s Church of Cencrea but also in respect of all of the tiny House-Congregations in the Presbytery of Rome (16:1-17).

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. I Cor. 12:3-28; 12:13; 16:1-8f; Eph. 4:3f; Phil. 1:1; Col. 4:14f; I Tim. 3:1-8f. Thus, in I 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**; I Tim. 5:17-22 re-enacts the Old Testament requirements of **two or three witnesses**, especially in respect of the work of the **Elders**; and Tit. 1 : 5-11 reminds Rev. Titus that he had been commissioned also to ordain **Elders** in **every city** throughout **Crete**.



**The Book of Hebrews grounds NT. Elders in the OT Church.**

In Heb. 3:3-6, we are told that Christ “was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He Who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.” For Christ was and is “a Son over His own house.” Nevertheless, just as the Old Testament Church was designed by Christ (and merely constructed by Moses) — so too the New Testament Church as its fulfilment and replacement was also designed, and is being built toward its completion, by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself — “Whose house are we.”

Similarly, in Heb. 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 thou make all things **according to the pattern shewed to thee in the Mount.**’ It was there that Moses, **together with the Elders** of the Older Testament’s **Church**, waited upon the Lord. Ex. 24:1-15 & 25:40.

Christ has now obtained an even more excellent ministry indeed. Yet, just as He formerly exercised His very good ministry also **through the rule of Elders in His Older Testament Church** — so too He even now exercises His still more excellent ministry also **through the rule of Elders in His Newer Testament Church.** See Heb. 13:7,17,24.

“Christ,” says Owen (XV:245f), is seen in “his faithfulness in and over the house of God, wherein He is compared unto and preferred above Moses. Heb. iii.3-6. Now the faithfulness of Moses consisted in this, that he did and appointed all things according to the **pattern** showed him in the Mount [Heb. 7:5]; that is, all whatever it was the will of God to be revealed and appointed for the **constitution, order, rule,** and worship of his **Church** — and nothing else. But it was the will of God that there should be **all** those things in the **Gospel Church-state also.**” For the Church in both Old and the New Testament times was and is the same Presbyterian system — in which Christ ruled, and keeps on ruling, through His Elders in their graded ecclesiastical Courts.

In Heb. 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. Dt. 17:6-9. Thus, in the very next chapter (Heb. 11:1-4f), Members of especially the New Testament Church are reminded of the faith and action of the Πρεσβυτεροι [Presbuteroi = presbyters] Abel and Enoch and Noah (whom also Owen regards as **Seniores**). Cf. Heb. 11:1-4f with 12:1-2f & 12:6-9 & 12:22f with 13:7,17,24.

**The General Assembly of the Church of the first-born in Heb. 12:22f**

In Heb. 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**



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Jerusalem, and...to the General Assembly and Church of the first-born..., and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, speaking better things than [ *that of* Abel] the Presbuteros.

Says Dr. Owen (XXIII:328-38): “We have here a blessed, yea, a glorious description of the Catholic Church [alias the Church Universal], as the nature and communion of it are revealed under the gospel.... The Catholic Church is distributed into two parts, namely that which is militant and that which is triumphant; they are both comprehended in this description....

“For the first expressions... Mount Sion, the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem’ — do **principally** respect that part of the Church which is **militant**.... The foundation of this catholic communion, or communion of the **Catholic Church**, comprising all that is holy and dedicated unto God...is laid in the recapitulation of all things in and by Jesus Christ. Eph. 1.10, ‘All things are gathered into one Head in Him’...which is the sole foundation of their **mutual communion**.... We have here an **Association**.”

Now precisely from “Gal. iv. 25-26...it is apparent that by ‘Mount Sion’ and ‘the heavenly Jerusalem’ the same state of the **Church [Militant]** is intended.... The Apostle calls the state of believers under the New Testament by the name of Sion.... All pleas about church order, power, rights and privileges, are useless — where men are not interested in this Sion state.... This was the City of God.

“The state of the Church under the New Testament is also.... Therein, He disposeth all his children into a spiritual society.... Their πολιτευμα [polit-eu-ma], or ‘city conversation’ is in heaven, Phil. iii.20.... This is the second privilege of the gospel-state, wherein all the remaining promises of the **Old Testament** are **transferred** and made over to **believers**.... There is a spiritual **order** and beauty in the communion of the Catholic Church, such as becomes the City of the living God....

“Another instance of the glory of this state is that therein believers come to ‘the General Assembly and Church of the first-born’.... The words here used, Πανηγυρις [pan-ey-gu-ris] and Εκκλησια [Ek-ley-see-ah] are borrowed from the customs of those cities whose government was democratical.... Πανηγυρις was the solemn Assembly.... Hence is the word used for any great General Assembly.... Εκκλησια was a ‘Meeting of the Citizens’ to determine of 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 what in the Old Testament Hebrew language is referred to under the name קָהָל [qahal, = those ‘called out’, or ‘chosen’]....

“Herein, there may be an allusion unto the Assemblies of such cities. But I **rather** think the Apostle hath respect unto the **Great Assembly** of all the [**mature**] **males** of the **Church** of the **Old Testament**. This was a divine institution to be observed three times a year.... Exod. xxx.23; Deut. xvi.16.... The Assembly of them was called ‘the Great Congregation.’ Ps. xxii.25; xxv.18; xl.9-10... It may be, regard is had unto the **General Assembly** of the whole people at Sinai — in receiving of the Law.” Indeed, one should note there that **the people** of the Lord **received that**

Law of God precisely through their graded Courts of Elders. Ex. 18:12-26; 19:1-7f; 20:1f; 21:22f; 24:4-9f.

**Heb. 13:7-24— “Remember your Guides” and “obey your Ruling Elders”**

Also Owen realized this. For he soon goes on (XXIII:420f) to quote Heb. 13:7 as follows: “Remember your **Guides** [plural] who have spoken unto you the Word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of [*their*] conversation” alias the purpose of their behaviour. Owen then further explains that this relates to the “persons of some men” [plural] who lead the people of God — namely to such as are “their Guides” [plural].

He adds: “We must consider who are the persons intended. Our translation makes them to be their present Rulers, των ηγουμενων υμων, [tow-n hey-goo-men-own hum-own] ‘them which have the **rule** over you’... ηγουμενος [hey-goo-menos] is a participle of the present tense — meaning: ‘he who **keeps on ruling**.’ Hence the plural ηγουμενοι [hey-goo-menoy] means ‘those who **keep on ruling**’— and thus: ‘**Rulers**’ alias **Ruling Elders**.”

Owen continues with his advice to New Testament Church Members to obey their Ruling Elders. On Heb. 13:17, he states: “There is another precept given with respect unto **them** afterwards...and that in words suited unto the duty which they owe **them**... ‘Obey **them** that have the **rule** over you, and submit yourselves’....

“Judas and Silas are called Ανδρας ηγουμενους εν τοις αδελφοις [Andras hey-goo-menous en tois adelphois] Acts xv.22 [the General Assembly passage!] — ‘**Chief Men** among the brethren’....

“ο ηγουμενος...is used in this chapter only — [Heb. 13] verses 7,17,24 — for an **Officer** or **Officers** in the Church...who **guide** and **direct** the **Church**; which is the nature of **their** Office. That is Bishops, Pastors, Elders that preside in the **Church**; guide it; and go before it.”

In XXIII : 462f, Owen cites also Heb. 13:7 — “Obey **them** that have the **rule** over you, and **submit** yourselves.” Owen then explains: “There is a supposition of a *settled church-state* — among them unto whom the Apostle wrote — whereof he gave intimation, chap. x. 24-25. For there were **among them Rulers**, and those that were *ruled*....

“These **Guides** or **Rulers**,” explains Owen, “are those who are called the ‘**Elders**’ [plural] or ‘**Bishops**’ [plural] of the **Church**.... There were **many** of them in **each** Church [alias each single Congregation].... Each of them [the several Congregations] must be supposed to have had more of these Rulers of their own than one; for they are directed to obey **them** that had the rule over them.... Here is no room left for a single Bishop and his rule in the Church — must less for a pope....

“These Rulers or Guides were then of two sorts, as the Apostle declares, I Tim. v.17; first, such as **together with rule laboured also in Word and Doctrine**; and then, such as attended unto rule only.... The **Rulers** or **Guides** here intended, were

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the **ordinary Elders** or Officers of the Church which were then settled among them.... And that there be such, more than one in every Church [alias Congregation], belongs unto the complete state and constitution of it.”

In Heb. 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.” It is significant that the latter phrase perhaps suggests that the Members of at least one **Presbytery in Italy** — and apparently from Italy — were giving their fraternal and indeed also **connectional** salute to Hebrew Christians under the several **Presbyteries in Judaea** within the **General Assembly of the Church** of the first-born. Compare Owen’s *Works* XVII:96-101 with Heb. 12:22f and also with Heb. 13:24.

At XXIII:484f Owen explains it is his immediate addressees (in **Judaea**) to whom the holy writer “speaks...peculiarly in this post[s]cript — giving them in charge [within Judaea] to salute both their **Rulers** and all the rest of the saints or members of the Church, in his name.... Who these **Rulers** were whom they are enjoined to salute, hath been fully declared on verse 17.”

### **Presbytery Elders in the so-called Catholic Epistles (James to Jude).**

In Jas. 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 I Pet. 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. Indeed, also in II Pet. 2:1-5f & 3:2-7f [cf. Heb. 11:2-7] Christians were reminded that **Noah was a Preaching Elder** — and that the world should heed similar preaching throughout history.

In I Jh. 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 I Jh. 2:19, he warns these groups against individualistically backsliding into Independency. In II Jh. 1-13, the same Apostle calls himself an **Elder**.

In III Jh. 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.

Dr. John Owen himself explains (XVI:199) “the *ends* of...**Synods** among the **Churches**.... The general end of them all, is to promote the edification of the whole Body or **Church Catholic**; and..... **to relieve** such by advice as may be by any Diotrephes unduly cast out of the Church.” III Jh. 1-10f.

In Jude (verse 1), that holy author calls himself “the brother of James” — apparently meaning the brother of the Moderator of the **Synod of Elders** described in Acts 15:13 cf. 12:17 & 21:18f. Jude (ver. 4) warns his addressees against “certain

men crept in unawares" (cf. Acts 15:24f & Gal. 2:3-10).

Jude accuses those hyper-independent individualists as having "gone in the way of Cain" — rather than having stayed in the good way of the **Presbyter** Abel (ver. 11 cf. Heb. 11:2-4). He even compares them with the unruly ante diluvians — who were preached against by **Presbyters** like Enoch and Noah (ver. 14 cf. Heb. 11:2-7 & II Pet. 2:1-5f). Finally, Jude urges his addressees to heed the words previously spoken by the **apostolic Elders** (verse 17f cf. Acts 15:4f & 15:13f & 15:23f).

Owen says (XXII:37) that the pre-Mosaic independent hyper-individualists mentioned "in Jude 7... 'are set forth for an example'...of what would be God's dealing with provoking sinners at the last day." Indeed, the great Congregationalist Theologian even refers to "the Socinians" alias the hyperindividualistic anti-trinitarian Unitarians. "Many things concerning God and his essential properties" such as His **Tri-unity**, explains Owen (I:87), "they have greatly perverted. So is that fulfilled in them which was spoken by Jude."

To this, 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 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 the perpetual fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, in the very long run, Orthodox Trinitarianism and Orthodox Presbyterianism stand or fall together.

*To be concluded (DV).*

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## Correspondence..... continued from page 48.

Russell, and Wittgenstein, etc., whose works leave Van Til out of sight for sheer profundity! Also Van Til's work was built on the exegesis of others like John Murray, such that he admitted that "the lack of detailed scriptural exegesis is a lack in *all* of my writings" [!!! & emph. H.W.] and "I have no excuse for this" [! Jerusalem & Athens p.203]. This dependence on others means that as *their* exegesis totters over common grace etc., so his profound edifice of thought totters in sympathy. Van Til is also internally self contradictory and enigmatic, so difficult to understand that even his best student and authority on his work today, Prof. John Frame frankly admits this, "like any human thinker, he is fallible" and notes that Van Til said: "**all teaching of Scripture is appar-**

**ently contradictory**". [!!!] An evident failure here to discriminate between paradox and contradiction landed Van Til squarely in the same neo-Hegelian quagmire as Barth, *and Brunner*, this latter who could *also*, like Van Til, **rampantly oppose Barth** from within this *same* epistemological milieu but for different reasons! By contrast, Gordon Clark was an able exegete and commentator, and an excellent teacher able like all good teachers to express profundities in simple terms. With deepest respects, we do not regard him as a "rationalist", rather we regard Van Til as an "irrationalist", or a "contradictionalist"! But we do not hold out Clark, or any other man, including Calvin, as being an infallible "paradigm", **only the Lord Christ** can fulfill that role. (Cf. Matt. 23 vv. 8 - 10).