

NOTE AND DOCUMENT

John Owen's Lost Huguenot Letters: French Reformed Protestants and the Reception of Congregational English Puritan Ecclesiology and Politics

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John Owen (1616–83) was one of the foremost English Puritans of the seventeenth century. His story has been largely limited to events in Britain. The letters examined in this article, translated from the French, reveal Owen's reputation and activity among Huguenots at the end of Oliver Cromwell's Protectorate. Responding to critics of English religion like Moïse Amyraut, they highlight the largely neglected internationality of Interregnum religion and politics in which Owen participated through epistolary and print culture. They display the apocalyptic themes behind attempts at international Protestant union where ecclesiological debates over the nature of synods, toleration, political sovereignty and Church-State relations were decisive.

The Cromwellian Protectorate's religious reputation was struggling on the international stage. Powerful voices in France presented the Congregationalists, whose views of church government

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characterised the Cromwellian religious settlement, as the ‘greatest heretics in the world, and enemies of all order and discipline’.¹ In 1658 John Owen (1616–83), Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, received a series of accusations written by an anonymous French Protestant. In eleven statements, the author challenged the orthodoxy of Congregationalist doctrine and practice of which Owen was the leading English representative. Owen and his colleagues were working towards an English-led European Protestant union, part of their apocalyptic vision of the downfall of papal Rome and the international spread of Protestantism. These accusations threatened to damage the reputation of religion in England in the French-speaking Protestant world, solidifying opposition against the role of the English Church and State as a Protestant peace-broker.² Gilles Dury, a Huguenot and newsbook editor living in London collaborated with Lewis Du Moulin, son of the renowned French scholar Peter Du Moulin, to prepare a response.³ They produced a large collection of letters, including one of Du Moulin’s to Owen and two of his responses. This collection has been almost entirely neglected.⁴ Presenting them here in translation represents a particular contribution to Owen studies and the broader history of the intersections between mid seventeenth-century British and French religion, politics, social networks and epistolary and print culture. This article briefly examines the significance of the letters in the context of scholarship on Owen and discusses their historical context. An appendix presents the letters themselves in translation, each with a brief introductory comment.

¹ Gilles Dury, *Lettre du sieur Jean Dury touchant l'estat présent de la religion en Angleterre, Escosse et Irlande: avec celles du docteur Jean Owen, et d'autres, qui traittent de l'indépendance des Eglises, et de la jurisdiction prétendue ecclésiastique*, London: R. Daniel for Samuel Thompson, 1658 (Wing D.286g), 316. The book does not currently appear in the *Universal Short Title Catalogue* or *Early English Books Online*. It does appear in the *English Short Title Catalogue* but mistakenly with John Dury as the author rather than a contributor.

² For recent work examining Congregationalist ecclesiological debates in the British context see Elliot Vernon and Hunter Powell (eds), *Church polity and politics in the British Atlantic world, c. 1635–66*, Manchester 2020, and Hunter Powell, *The crisis of British Protestantism: church power in the Puritan revolution, 1638–44*, Manchester 2015. The author’s forthcoming PhD thesis examines the international European context of ecclesiological and toleration debates in Britain during the Interregnum.

³ Gilles Dury appears to have been no relation to the Scottish John Dury.

⁴ The publication has been misinterpreted once in Anglophone scholarship to mean that John Dury opposed the English Congregationalists: Robert K. Merton, *The sociology of science: theoretical and empirical investigations*, London 1973, 240 n. 37. In Francophone scholarship the book appears briefly in a footnote and a monograph and conference paper refer to it in relation to Moïse Amyraut and his concern over English influence on French Churches, but do not interact any further: Christophe Tournu, *Théologie et politique dans l'oeuvre en prose de John Milton*, Nord 2000, 272 n. 4; George Ascoli, *La Grande-Bretagne devant l'opinion française au XVII^e siècle*, Geneva 1971, 407; Élisabeth Labrousse, ‘Histoire des idées au XVII^e siècle’, *École Pratique des Hautes Études, 4^e section: sciences historiques et philologiques*, Paris 1972–3, 529–38.

New contexts in John Owen's biography

John Owen's significance in religious and political histories of mid-seventeenth-century Britain is well established.⁵ He was a chaplain to Oliver Cromwell, Dean of Christ Church and vice-chancellor of Oxford University, member of parliament, a prolific author, preacher to some of the most powerful figures and bodies in Civil War and Interregnum England, and never far from multiple changes of government between 1648 and 1660. Owen was remarkably well connected, whether as a favoured academic and minister under Cromwell, or later as a Restoration nonconformist who enjoyed the patronage and protection of high society. Yet the epistolary record of these networks is sparse. Several letters were published in collections of his works in 1721 and in subsequent editions. The only specific gathering of his correspondence, published in 1970, collected ninety-eight items either to, from or which involved Owen.⁶ This contrasts with the over 1,200 known letters of Owen's contemporary Richard Baxter, who never attained the kind of offices which Owen enjoyed. This lack of material stems from the absence of surviving personal papers. Most of the extant material appears in other collections, and only a few letters came to publication through the early preservers of Owen's legacy. Either remains of his own papers are yet to be discovered or, more likely, he ensured that they did not remain fully intact after his death.

Owen was probably cautious about what he left behind. By the time of his death, memories of his actions around Charles I's execution were still being dredged up by the enemies of nonconformity. George Hicke (1642–1715), at the time chaplain to Charles II, preached a sermon to the mayor and aldermen of London in 1682 in which he cited Owen's preaching from 1649 as evidence that he saw contemporary monarchs as evil servants of the Antichrist.⁷ Another of the king's chaplains wrote shortly before Owen died that 'we heartily wish, Dr. *Owen*, yet Surviving, would Recant his Treasonable Words spoken to the *Commons* of the *Rump Parliament*, the very day after the *King's Murther*, on *Jan.* 31. 1648'.⁸

⁵ Beyond Owen's historical significance, his enduring relevance to contemporary religious movements, particularly within transatlantic Evangelicalism, is evidenced through the publication by a major American Christian publisher of the first new edition of his works since William Gould's mid-nineteenth century edition: *The complete works of John Owen*, ed. Lee Gatiss and Shawn D. Wright, Wheaton, IL 2022–.

⁶ Peter Toon, *The correspondence of John Owen (1616–83)*, Cambridge 1970.

⁷ George Hicke, *A sermon preached before the Lord Mayor*, London: Walter Kettiby, 1682 (Wing H.1864), 20.

⁸ David Jenner, *Beaufrons*, London: Charles Morden, 1683 (Wing J.657), 24. The letter 's' is used where intended typographically. Otherwise, original English quotations remain unchanged in this article.

These were dangerous comments – particularly so in the aftermath of the supposed Popish Plot conspiracy to kill Charles II, and the heightening suppression of nonconformity in the early 1680s.⁹ Not long before his death, Owen appeared before the king to deny on oath his involvement with the Rye House Plot.¹⁰ It is reasonable to conclude that in this atmosphere Owen did not intend to leave much behind of what must have been a vast web of correspondence. The letters of Owen's close friend, the Civil War general and senior Interregnum politician Charles Fleetwood (c. 1618–92), offer an interesting parallel. What little remains from the Commonwealth and Protectorate eras frequently has names redacted and content excised.¹¹ For men like Owen in the defeated cause, the wrong letter in the wrong hands could have had disastrous consequences. This makes any discovery of previously unknown correspondence particularly valuable.

The letters printed here offer an especial contribution to Owen's biography, for they represent concrete evidence of a much broader array of international contacts and a wider reputation during his Interregnum career than has previously been recognised. While Owen has been placed among the wider European continental context of Reformed theology and Renaissance thought, there has been little evidence that he enjoyed any kind of notable reputation in European Reformed communities, at least during the 1650s.¹² Peter Toon included a letter with multiple signatories addressed to the Swiss Reformed Churches in his collection of Owen's correspondence, with Crawford Gribben referencing the letter.¹³ The extent of Owen's international activities during the Interregnum remains unexplored.¹⁴ These letters therefore give the first glimpse into Owen's connections with Huguenot networks in Britain, France, Holland and the French-speaking regions of the Vaud and Geneva. Owen's name appeared prominently on the title page of the printed letter collection alongside that of the renowned Protestant ecumenist John Dury with whom he was closely connected during the Interregnum. They show how his response, as the movement's leading theological representative, was sought to defend Congregationalists in France. As Gilles Dury commented in his preface, justifying printing the letters, Owen was someone with a reputation for 'great merit and exemplary piety'.¹⁵

⁹ See John Marshall, *John Locke, toleration and early enlightenment culture*, Cambridge 2006, 108–11.

¹⁰ See Crawford Gribben, 'Owen and politics', in Crawford Gribben and John W. Tweeddale (eds), *T&T Clark handbook of John Owen*, London 2022, 114–15.

¹¹ Correspondence and papers of Charles Fleetwood, 1652–66, British Library, London, MS Add 4165.

¹² Carl Trueman, *John Owen: reformed, catholic, renaissance man*, Abingdon 2007.

¹³ Crawford Gribben, *John Owen and English Puritanism: experiences of defeat*, Oxford 2016, 154.

¹⁴ This topic forms a major focus of this author's PhD dissertation.

¹⁵ Dury, *Lettre du sieur Jean Dury*, 15.

Du Moulin's comment in the final letter in the publication, to Monsieur Vauquelin, the pastor in Dieppe, summarises the impact they expected Owen's intervention to have: 'I am sending you the letter from Dr. Owen ... which silences those in France.'¹⁶

Context

Leading French Protestants in the mid-seventeenth century saw the state of British religion as a major threat. The Congregational or 'Independent' model of church government gained powerful support during the English Civil Wars and had become the *de facto* religious establishment during the Commonwealth and Cromwellian Protectorate.¹⁷ To some Huguenot leaders these facts represented twin challenges with the same result: anarchy in Church and State. The first issue was ecclesiology. Independents did not like the name, but they gained it by teaching that the visible Church consisted of individual congregations which did not ultimately depend on any others. No superior church power existed beyond the local congregation. There could be a gathering of churches (plural) for advice and mutual support. But unlike in Presbyterian or Episcopalian polity, no extension of church power existed beyond the congregation which could still be called the Church (singular). These extra-congregational hierarchical models were taken as a departure from the New Testament. At worst, they represented a key enemy in Congregationalist apocalyptic discourse. Christ had given church power directly to each individual congregation and its officers, but this had been usurped by concentrating power among bishops and other layers of clergy, supported by an unholy Church-State alliance. To Huguenot leaders like Moïse Amyraut (1596–1664), and by the 1645 national synod of the French Reformed churches, Congregationalism unleashed all kinds of heresies and schisms by removing mechanisms of external oversight. It was an atomisation of the Church. The second challenge was in the perception of what a Congregational polity meant for the state. This concern is epitomised in Amyraut's identification of the English Independents as king-killers, arguing that their anti-hierarchical, democratic form of church

¹⁶ Ibid. 316–17.

¹⁷ Congregational and Independent are interchangeable terms throughout this article except where the context makes clear otherwise. For the nature of the Cromwellian religious settlement see Blair Worden, 'Toleration and the Cromwellian protectorate', in W. J. Sheils (ed.), *Persecution and toleration: papers read at the twenty-second summer meeting and the twenty-third winter meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society* (Studies in Church History xxi, 1984), 199–233.

government subverted the concept of sovereignty required for monarchy to function.¹⁸

Following these worries about the stability of affairs in England and their influence on France, a document began circulating that contained various accusations against Congregational belief and practice. The Huguenot pastor Vauquelin sent a copy to Lewis Du Moulin in Oxford. Du Moulin was implicated in the apparent scandal. His book *Paraenesis* (1656), with a preface by Owen, attacked the views of Moïse Amyraut, one of the most influential Huguenot theologians.¹⁹ Amyraut had already written several times against Congregational views of church government and the danger to the French throne from radical English politics following the execution of Charles I in 1649. Du Moulin's *Paraenesis* attempted to reverse the accusation. It argued that Congregational polity was most compatible with political sovereignty and accused Amyraut and other Presbyterians of erecting an empire within an empire through their two-kingdoms view of Church-State relations.²⁰ Du Moulin had been accused of trying to tie his own views to the leading English Congregationalists. French enemies of Congregationalism took this as obviously untrue, since Du Moulin accommodated the role of church synods, whereas they believed the Congregationalists did not. The nature and authority of synods, as is clear in Du Moulin's letter and Owen's second letter printed below, was a major issue in this controversy. Vindication of Du Moulin's *Paraenesis* on synods and the nature of Church-State relations became a major rationale for assembling a response to Amyraut and the anonymous articles.

Du Moulin was also forwarded a letter written by John Dury, the Protestant ecumenist, to his father who died in March 1658, possibly before reading it.²¹ This was a letter Dury had prepared to distribute across Europe as a report on the condition of religion in England, Scotland and Ireland. It would demonstrate to detractors that the English religious establishment was orthodox, yet tolerant of all who could agree on fundamental aspects of the faith. Dury also argued that despite the reputation of Scottish Presbyterianism as a model of a Reformed Church and State, England was the exemplar, and Scotland was in chaos. This was due to a failure to understand the moment. Scottish Presbyterians had not realised that God's apocalyptic message for the times demanded religious toleration among orthodox Protestants, and the severance of clerical control over the state. This

¹⁸ Moïse Amyraut, *Discours de la souveraineté des roys*, Paris 1650.

¹⁹ Lewis Du Moulin, *Paraenesis ad aedificatores imperii in imperio*, London 1656.

²⁰ For analysis of the wider continental theological debate over Church and State see Douglas Nobbs, *Theocracy and toleration*, 2nd edn, Cambridge 2012.

²¹ This appeared as the first letter in Dury, *Lettre du sieur Jean Dury*.

echoed Du Moulin's warning against an independent and hierarchically structured Church within a State – a kingdom within a kingdom.

So when Du Moulin received the accusations forwarded by Pastor Vauquelin, he planned with Gilles Dury to obtain a response from Owen and to publish it together with John Dury's letter and other pieces. It would defend English Congregationalism and Du Moulin's work of political theology, *Paraenesis*.²² It would also further the apocalyptic argument that the biblical 'mystery of iniquity', or Antichrist, was not merely represented by the Roman papacy.²³ This was a widespread Protestant view.²⁴ Rather, for Owen and his colleagues, the Antichrist was present wherever there was persecution amongst orthodox Christians who disagreed on secondary matters, an exercise of state power encouraged by clergy who acted as an equal institution to the sovereign government.

²² 'Political theology' is used here in the sense of the relationship between religious and political ideas and practices, not with reference to the specific work of the political philosopher Carl Schmitt (1888–1985). See, for example, the usage of the journal *Political Theology*.

²³ A reference to 2 Thessalonians ii.7, a text commonly cited in eschatological discussion.

²⁴ For discussion of Puritan apocalyptic views see Crawford Gribben, *The Puritan millennium: literature and theology, 1550–1682*, Dublin 2000, and Martyn C. Cowan, *John Owen and the civil war apocalypse: preaching, prophecy and politics*, Abingdon 2019.

APPENDIX I

The correspondence of John Owen and Lewis Du Moulin in translation

John Owen's first reply to Lewis Du Moulin

Though Owen begins with his usual *topos* of epistolary modesty, in mid-1658 he was certainly very busy due to his various responsibilities and ambitious writing schedule.¹ He also expressed scepticism about the value of engaging with the anonymous author's articles. He had been involved in a written controversy with the Presbyterian and former Westminster Assembly member Daniel Cawdrey for over a year with no obvious benefit.² His belittling of the value of the articles may have been a rhetorical strategy on his part in anticipation of what Du Moulin would do with his response to them. But it is probably also true that he was getting tired of what he saw as an intractable unwillingness to take Congregational belief and practice on its own terms. Owen's expression of love for Du Moulin was more than politeness, as Du Moulin had found his support as vice-chancellor of Oxford invaluable as a foreign teacher in Oxford. According to Gilles Dury they corresponded regularly.³ Owen then proceeds to respond to the eleven articles of accusation from the anonymous French author. These appear in italics as in the original publication, followed by Owen's responses.

[*Lettre du sieur Jean Dury*, 134–54]

Dr John Owen to Mr Du Moulin, professor at Oxford

Translated from the English

Sir,

I received one of your letters written from London, to which I did not respond, especially as your whole discourse related to some articles which I had never seen, and of which I had never heard before your said letter. So I did not know what to say to it, nor on various points what I could guess of your intention.

I have sought to represent the meaning of the source language in a way natural in the target language. Notes are placed where terms were particularly challenging or rare, or where I believe it will show the translation rationale. I have also noted places where the letters' own translation from English to French has impacted terminology. I have not sought to retain the typographical structure of the letters as originally printed. As a translation rather than transcription I have not preserved punctuation where it seemed unhelpful. I have not preserved the French convention of a non-breaking space ('une espace insécable') which appears around punctuation in the original text. I have tried to keep comments on the text of the letters themselves to a necessary minimum, particularly focusing on introducing names which may be unfamiliar.

¹ Gribben, *John Owen and English Puritanism*, chs v, vi.

² John Owen, *Of schisme*, Oxford: L. L. for T. Robinson, 1657 (Wing O.780), and *A review of the true nature of schisme*, Oxford: Henry Hall for Thomas Robinson, 1657 (Wing O.803).

³ Dury, *Lettre du sieur Jean Dury*, 313.

I received another letter of yours today, written before your departure from Oxford, with an enclosure which explained to me your enigmas contained in the preceding piece. I have since read the said document, and as for the accusations of the eleven articles which it contains, with which the Independents are charged, I will now give you this brief answer. Certainly, Sir, by the grace of God, I have learned to digest the slanders and false representations of our actions, so that I am not inclined to make apologies on this subject and have little hope that they could prevail much, even if I were to use them. I have to do with deep-rooted prejudices in such encounters, and with parties and affections which have other motives, against which the clearest defences which one could make do not usually gain much. We generally must deal with people who are afraid to see, and who do not wish us to be found other than what their own interest is that we be esteemed. You also know what my continual employment is, so that if not for my love for you, and because of the honour I bear to the one whose name is underneath the afore-said writing,⁴ I could hardly resolve to lose so much time, as to take into consideration the aspersions and calumnies of such anonymous authors. Nevertheless, since you lead me to understand that my opinion on the said articles will not be disagreeable to some persons of knowledge and piety, I beg you to take the following letter written in haste, as my thoughts have presented themselves.

1. That *the Independents hold that no one can enjoy the benefit of the Gospel, without a particular association.*

R. 1. I suppose that by a particular association is meant a particular church, otherwise I do not know what they mean. 2. The benefits of the Gospel are of two kinds: 1) internal and spiritual, or 2) external and ecclesiastical. 3. Participation in the external benefits of the Gospel concerns either the thing itself, or its proper manner. All we can say to this article is that unless they are members, or joined to some particular church, men cannot participate rightly in the external and ecclesiastical privileges of the Gospel. The Presbyterians among us say the same thing, and this is undoubtedly the rule of Christ.

2. That *every man who has sufficient gifts is to be held a Pastor if chosen by this association.*

R. 1. I suppose that by association he still means a particular church assembling for the celebration of the same numerical ordinances.⁵ 2. That by the man who has sufficient gifts he means a qualified man, or one endowed with the necessary qualities necessary for the work of the ministry, according to the apostolic rules. 3. That by the choice he means a solemn ecclesiastical act, with all the required circumstances. All that we say to this is that a particular church has power to choose its own officers. Once chosen, they must be solemnly separated and set apart by fasting and prayers and by the laying on of hands (of the elders of the same

⁴ Pastor Vauquelin of Dieppe, who forwarded the accusations to Du Moulin.

⁵ Or 'specific ordinances'. The phrase 'ordonnances numériques' has been directly transliterated by Du Moulin. The phrase is rare and appears original in Owen, *Of schism*. It seems to mean the sacraments or acts of worship of a particular congregation, as opposed to the abstract concept or command to observe them: *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. 'numerical, adj. and n.' entry A.I.2.

church only, as some say, or of the elders of other churches also, as others would have it). And we believe that this accords with the institution of Christ, and with the continual practice of all antiquity in its purity. See Blondel in his book *De Iure Plebis*.⁶

3. That *while he is agreed upon by this association, he is a Pastor. But if he is rejected by this association, or if this association is dissolved, he loses his ministry.*

R. 1. This article is composed *ad invidiam*, to make us odious. No man's ministry depends on the subsequent approval or denial of the church. If any officer deserves to be deposed from his office, or leaves the church to which he was related, he retains all his ministerial abilities, and may preach the word as he has opportunity. But we do not believe that he is a pastor or a preacher in office until he is again called to be related to some church in that position. I have no time at present to dispute. I must only declare to you the opinion I hold on this subject, which I do also, as usual, with too much haste, inasmuch as I could easily prove this assertion.

4. *They consider the ministers of England, both Episcopal and Presbyterian, to be members of the Antichrist.*

R. There are people who have an interest in portraying us this way to our brothers, who have not yet learned to love truth and peace. In short, this whole accusation is false. As for the Presbyterians, I have recently published several treatises in which I declared my opinion to be contrary to what is imputed to us here, and that I see them as very worthy ministers of Christ in the work of the Gospel.⁷ I will say no more at present. I shall only pray to the God of all mercy that He may be pleased not to impute such slanders (invented to make us odious to our brothers) to those who are their authors and agitators.

5. That *their ministers only administer the Lord's Supper or baptism to those of their particular congregation.*

R. This article is also false. For, 1. most ministers of our opinion administer baptism to the children of the visible faithful, whether they are members of any particular church or not. This is my own practice. 2. We always admit members of other congregations to the Lord's Supper, and not only those who are members of Independent congregations, but also those of the Presbyterians who are Reformed.⁸ 3. Indeed, we do not admit those who are not members of any

⁶ This was a strategic and perhaps somewhat tongue-in-cheek invocation of the famous Huguenot scholar David Blondel's *De jure plebis in regimine ecclesiastico*, Paris 1648.

⁷ For example, see Owen's reply to the Presbyterian Daniel Cawdrey where he refers to the 'friendly composure of *affections* ... between *sober* and godly men of the *Presbyterian* and *Congregationall* judgement': *A review*, 7.

⁸ Owen likely made the distinction here between Reformed and non-Reformed Presbyterians in terms of Presbyterians who practised open parish communion without enquiry about suitability (un-reformed) and those who made some form of separation between general hearers and those worthy to take part in the sacrament. It was a rhetorical strategy to again identify Congregational norms with the best of Reformed

particular church, and this for several good and just reasons, which do not need mentioning here.

6. That *they claim to make a church composed only of Saints and believe that they have a special knowledge of the elect.*

R. 1. We profess that we desire to admit no members to the participation of all the ordinances among us except those who are visible Saints and Saints by profession. The Presbyterians say the same thing. As for the difference that seems to exist between us on this point, I will only say with the learned and reverend Mr Rutherford that if the present practice were brought back to its principles, many fewer would be admitted than currently are.⁹ 2. As to the pretext that we have a special knowledge of the elect, this is a slander of our adversaries, and such in my judgement, that no living person would want to confess himself the author.

7. That *whoever has entered one of their associations cannot transfer to another without permission.*

R. 1. He who is a member of one church or congregation may join another at any point, and for any time, as his business or residence may require. This includes participation in all the ordinances. But to say, 2. that a man may entirely leave the relation he has to a particular church, without giving a good account of the reasons why, and be admitted into another without the consent of the one they are leaving, is to open the door to an infinite number of disorders and separations and to go directly against the continuous practice of the purest antiquity. But I must confess to you that many of our churches are not so strict in this respect as is desirable.

8. That *their principal aim is to empty the parishes, to make their particular associations.*

R. 1. This is false and a complete misunderstanding of our intentions. We do not have such a goal, whether mainly or secondarily. 2. This is equally false regarding our practice. All the Congregational ministers who publicly preach as pastors in various parishes are witnesses of this. 3. It is true that we have a goal, which we dare to confess before the whole world, which is to reform the parishes as much as they are able to be.

9. That *they think themselves the only ones with a church constituted according to the intention of Christ and urge those who have Presbyterian pastors to come out of Babylon to Christ.*

R. 1. The constitution of churches according to the intention of Christ either concerns the essence of the constitution itself, which, with regard to all its subject matter, makes them pleasing in their service to Christ as his churches. In this

practice, painting his accusers as too loose and therefore not adequately Reformed. Policies over admission to communion were a frequent source of controversy in the Interregnum Church.

⁹ The Presbyterian theologian Samuel Rutherford (1600–61), a highly respected polemicist and formerly a Scottish Commissioner to the Westminster Assembly. Owen sought to prove that Congregational practice was not innovative by invoking his opinion.

sense, Independents are far from wanting to appropriate such a constitution exclusively for themselves. They freely and willingly yield it to Presbyterian churches in England and elsewhere and would even give them precedence, following the rule of the Apostle to give honour to one another. Or 2. it denotes a perfection of order in all administrations, with the interest of order in service and discipline. In this regard, if, in one or more particulars, they did not believe that their way was closer to the intention of Christ and the practice of the primitive churches than that of their brothers, there would be no difference between us. 3. As for the conclusion of the assertion in the said article, I will only say that it is entirely false with regard to all the Congregationalist ministers whom I know, or of whom I have ever heard.¹⁰

10. Concerns *the toleration of those who do not destroy the foundation of Christian doctrine; that they*¹¹ *favour the Anabaptists; and that Independence is an open refuge to all heresies, etc.*

R. 1. There is no fixed opinion among us on toleration, or its extent. Individuals among us differ in views, as do the Presbyterians. As you know I have written on this subject, and I know several of the ablest Presbyterians in England who have been satisfied with what I have said. The general opinion of most theologians in England is for a civil toleration of those who do not err in fundamental matters.¹² 2. As for the Anabaptists who are moderate, pious, and sound in the faith, except only in the opinion which the denomination gives them – we confess that we judge it inexpedient to banish, hang, or burn them for this, and we have no further advantage to make with them. 3. The chief Anabaptist in England is a Presbyterian Minister. 4. I do not know what the Anonymous Gentleman means by the Independence which he claims to be the sanctuary or refuge of all heresies. I know of no congregation, of those called Independents, where anything condemned as heresy by the Reformed churches is tolerated for even an hour; and except for only one that has fallen into Arminianism, this assertion can have neither foundation or true semblance of anything practiced or affirmed among us.¹³ On the contrary, we labour as hard as we can to eradicate all heresies, and in this, to speak modestly, we are at least equal to our Presbyterian brethren who follow the other way. But these accusations are political slanders.

11. This last article is composed of several parts, which I must take separately to be able to answer them. He says 1. that *the Independents are against all liturgical forms in divine service, saying that this binds the Spirit.*

¹⁰ However, Owen's parliamentary preaching in 1651 had identified the Scottish Presbyterians as part of the apocalyptic Babylon through their support for the Stuarts and their rejection of broader Protestant religious toleration, though Owen and the Congregationalists associated with him certainly did not see Presbyterianism as in itself anti-Christian as the writer of the articles claimed. ¹¹ The Independents.

¹² These 'matters' referred to doctrines agreed upon as fundamental to the Christian faith.

¹³ John Goodwin (1594–1665), a prolific controversialist, tolerationist and leading Independent minister. His Arminianism, among other differences, meant exclusion from the group of orthodox Congregationalists like Owen who played a public role in the Interregnum religious settlement. His opinions also proved a source of frustration to these Congregationalists as they tried to distance themselves from a reputation for heterodoxy.

R. 1. This is not the place to declare my particular opinion on this point. 2. Whatever the Independents' opinion on this subject may be, there is no difference here between Independents and Presbyterians. As far as I know the opinion of both parties on this is entirely the same.

He says 2. that *the Independents do not teach their children the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, or the Ten Commandments,*¹⁴ *things which are no longer heard of in their assemblies.*

R. 1. If he means that Independents do not instruct their children in the principles of religion, the slander is only too obvious. He who does not continually keep the service of God established in his families, who does not strive every day to bring up his children in the nurture and fear of the Lord,¹⁵ and does not work to instruct them in the principles of Christ's doctrine according to their ability, is not admitted into our churches. Or if he is admitted he is rebuked by ecclesiastical means for his sin and negligence. It is impossible for me to tell you what order each individual takes for this instruction in his family. But I believe most of them do this same thing which we are accused here of lacking.

He says 3. that *except the preacher's text not a single line of God's word is read in their assemblies.*

R. 1. Where Independents or Presbyterians preach sermons during the week, in extraordinary times and places that we call Lectures, no reading of Scripture is done there, but only a Psalm is sung and the [preacher's] text read. 2. In our public assemblies Scripture is always read and expounded, as anyone who has only witnessed them in passing knows very well.

He says 4. that *the prayers before and after meals are abolished in some Colleges because they are forms.*¹⁶

R. This is entirely false, as far as I have ever heard.

He says 5. *that the most eminent among them have come to the point of covering themselves¹⁷ when the Lord's Prayer is said in front of them, and of maintaining that to comply with it is a sin against the Holy Spirit.*

R. If it were not for the preface of this objection, which attributes it to the most eminent of us, I should think that I should be particularly singled out in this accusation, because in the past, when I was Vice-Chancellor of Oxford, similar rumours had been spread about me. But as for myself, and for all those whom I know, this accusation is manifestly false; and I cannot conceive what peace of mind these people can have who take pleasure in deceiving themselves. Nevertheless, I

¹⁴ In French, 'Commandemens de Dieu', translated here as 'the Ten Commandments' to make clearer that the accuser was referring to the liturgical use of the law as summarised by the Ten Commandments and read during corporate and family worship, as opposed to God's commands in general.

¹⁵ This would almost certainly have been recognised as a direct quotation from the Pauline command in Ephesians vi.4 regarding fathers' duties in raising their children.

¹⁶ Rather than extemporaneous or personally prepared.

¹⁷ i.e. putting on their hats.

cannot deny that I have a particular opinion about this form,¹⁸ namely that the use of these words is not prescribed, and that to say them after finishing our own prayers, as if there were some particular sanctity or efficacy in their pronunciation, is something which seems to me to be problematic and doubtful in its foundation. However, I do not absolutely condemn the use of this form of words. And this is only my particular opinion, in which it is well known that some of our own differ.

So, Sir, I have delivered to you my thoughts in great haste concerning the aforementioned articles or false accusations. You may do with this writing as you please; only I ask that you read it over beforehand, since I have not had the opportunity to do so myself. And though I know I have spoken the truth, I am not sure whether I have done so in a tolerable way of discourse, as my present occupations prevent me from being able to review it. I am, Sir

Your very affectionate servant,

John Owen.

Oxford, June 7, 1658.

Lewis Du Moulin's letter to Owen

At the beginning of Du Moulin's reply to Owen it is clear that Owen's name was known among the Huguenot community and a particular target for enemies of Congregationalism given his position as their premier theologian. Knowledge of Owen will also have come from his preface to Du Moulin's *Paraenesis*, as well as his deep involvement with the Protestant union work of John Dury across Protestant Europe. Du Moulin thanks Owen for his response to the articles, and then quickly moves into a discussion of what he sees as the fundamental issue of the nature and authority of the Church, church synods and the Christian ministry.

[*Lettre du sieur Jean Dury*, 155–89]

Response from Mr. du Moulin to the previous letter from Doctor John Owen.

Translated from the English

Sir,

I have received from you a very relevant response to the imputations and slanders of the Anonymous. I hope that it will serve to open the eyes of many good and holy persons among the Protestants of France, particularly among those of the Ministry, who, being possessed of powerful prejudices against your person in particular, and against your brothers, have been too gullible and too quick to lend an ear to the false rumours that have been spread about you. Those who have already seen your defence eagerly desire it to be translated into French, so that the candour and self-denying spirit with which you repel these slanders may be known to

¹⁸ i.e., the Lord's Prayer.

everyone. Also, that you and your brothers, the Congregational ministers, will be openly recognised as true ministers of the Gospel, professing the same faith and doctrine, bound by the same bond of charity, and working together to build up the house of God. Jesus Christ is the foundation, which while they retain, these small differences concerning discipline should not cause any breach between you and the brothers of the Presbytery, whether in England or beyond the sea. May the Lord forgive and change the hearts of those who try to sow division and to persuade your friends that your disagreement on matters of discipline constitutes a schism and rebellion against truth. One of my tasks recently has been to show the world that there is nothing of the sort, and to dispel any misunderstandings that may exist between those who share your views and those who adhere in France to Presbyterian discipline. I have shown that you are not so far apart from each other, nor so different as the common enemies of peace cry out, which Jesus Christ has bequeathed as a legacy among the brethren.¹⁹ I have remained impartial between the two parties, proposing the ecclesiastical path, which I am convinced is closest to Holy Scripture, the practice of the faithful, both Jews and early Christians, and right reason. I do not deny being equally opposed to the Presbyterian and Congregational churches, by refusing both of them any sort of jurisdiction that can be imagined in external matters – except for that which is based on natural law and which is enjoyed by all corporations, societies, and free and independent families; for I do not concede that pastors or churches have any jurisdiction other than that which the Spirit of God in the Word has over the hearts of men, for their conversion from the natural state to that of grace. However, I was so much your adversary that as I studied my main question, I happened to become your friend again, and to discover that my principles, which I prove to be in conformity with Scripture and Reason, agreed very well with the foundations on which the Congregational way is established. For I cannot remove all coercive jurisdiction from synods, leaving them only the authority to declare, advise, and counsel, without also considering all particular churches as each *self-ruled*.²⁰

So you and I must agree that each particular church, under the same numerical ordinances, is the *primary entity*²¹ for its own discipline and establishing its own ordinances, and that the discipline of several particular churches aggregated into one body is only prudent and by mutual consent. Further, that because synods have no other authority than to advise and counsel, none of their resolutions can oblige. They do not have the force of decrees and canons until the advice of each particular church has been taken, yet like any other jurisdiction, even this obligation only exists in Synods by consent. Therefore, it should not be pressured or enforced by them through coercion or constraint, but rather through persuasion. Each particular church has the same privilege enjoyed by every free society to appoint its own magistrates within the scope of its own organization, in matters of election or rejection of doctrines or members. This magistracy is of the same nature as the jurisdiction of public magistrates. Therefore, there is no doubt that it must be subordinated to this jurisdiction, just like all other acts of magisterial jurisdiction

¹⁹ i.e., an inheritance of peace and unity.

²⁰ Original in Latin, 'sui juris': of its own right.

²¹ Original in Latin, 'primum subjectum': first subject.

that national or provincial synods claim. Therefore, since each particular church has the power to establish a magistracy by natural right, through the same token it also has the power of coercion to compel obedience. This is a power that synods do not have unless by delegation from the sovereign magistrate or the churches themselves. In this I distinguish subordination from delegation. For synodal power is not only subordinate to that of the magistrate or particular churches but is always delegated by one of them. But although the power of particular churches is subordinate to the magistrate's power, it is not by delegation from said magistrate. For they enjoy it by divine and natural right, whether the magistrate takes care of the churches or not. Marital power is likewise subordinate to the magistrate but not delegated by him.

I am certain you have acknowledged to me that your principles and mine are very similar and have great affinity with each other, differing more in words than in substance. We both reject any kind of coercive jurisdiction in churches gathered together. We both believe that Holy Scripture proposes to us only three meanings of the word 'church', one of which is invisible and the other two visible: one catholic or universal, and the other particular, composed of members who are either chosen and selected, as you believe to be most appropriate, or who live together in the same neighbourhood or parish, and have the will to come together in the same place under the same ordinances. We both agree that putting someone out of communion is an act of the particular church and all its members, and not just of the pastors. Much less do we assert that putting someone out of communion is an act by which he is expelled from the communion of the catholic or universal visible church. Otherwise, the Pope would have some reason to excommunicate an Emperor of Germany or a King of France, since as a pastor of the universal church he has the right, like any gospel minister, to exclude a man from his jurisdiction, which has the same boundaries and limits as his communion, which also extends as far as the universal church. Perhaps the only difference between us is that I believe the discipline which is taken by the consent of the members of a particular church is based on a natural divine right common to all kinds of societies, while you believe it is a positive divine right. But whichever it may be, we still agree that the closer the jurisdiction of particular churches approaches the nature of the jurisdiction of magistrates the more coercive power it has, and so it is subordinate to the sovereign magistrate.

Furthermore, I agree with you that particular churches, although represented by their deputies, must retain their full freedom to assent or dissent from the determinations of a synod. For this is also observed in matters of faith and religion. It should be the case that the judgements of Synods are treated like the resolutions taken in the assembly of the Estates of the United Provinces,²² where there are as many republics as there are cities. Among these the plurality of votes has no place in a general resolution, because if a city does not approve the resolution there is no obligation to follow it. Mr Amyraut holds this opinion in his *Theses*,

²² The representative assembly of the seven provinces of the Netherlands, united in the Dutch Republic. The Estates were responsible for managing the affairs of the provinces, including defence and taxation.

where he says that national synods should not determine anything by decree before they have the opinion and consent of particular churches.²³ Similarly, if we do not indeed agree, we come very close to having the same opinion on establishing the acts by which particular churches are governed. I consider these to be of two kinds, corresponding to the two notions of the word and thing of the church, whether it is considered as an assembly of Christians and pious people gathered together for the service of God, or as a society of people endowed with prudence and natural liberty of body and spirit. In this latter sense, the church produces the same kind of acts of jurisdiction as do all other societies, corporations, city bodies, or republics, of the same nature and of as great an extent. There is therefore no more need at present to separate the jurisdiction of churches or synods from that of the magistrate, than there is to separate the jurisdiction of the republic from that of the same magistrate. I prove that these acts of jurisdiction are of the same nature by the following reasons:

1. The laws, decrees, canons and ordinances of consistories and synods are made by a majority of votes, as in political assemblies. So much so that in one case as in the other, the laws and constitutions are valid, not because they are holy and just, but because they have been decided, not by the best, but by the largest and strongest party; and often the best and wisest part is carried by the most numerous: In short, it must be presumed in both cases that where there are more votes, there is also more wisdom.
2. In both assemblies, the constitutions must be published by those who have the power to command obedience, and to bring punishment and censure in case of disobedience. Without this all laws, decrees and constitutions are only advice.
3. These two alleged different jurisdictions are employed in laws and constitutions made by men. Therefore, it is absurd and impossible to have two coordinated powers making laws independently of each other in the same territory without great conflicts of jurisdiction between them.
4. The same jurisdiction makes laws and constitutions on all sorts of matters and subjects that can be enjoined and commanded and require obedience. What has been observed not only in the purest times, as under Constantine, but also in the most corrupt times, and by magistrates who are in communion with the Pope, is that every synodal or consistorial regulation has been the subject of laws published by emperors and kings.
5. Since it is not within the power of magistrates or ministers to make laws that have any divine authority, it is necessary there be only one authority and one jurisdiction, which is necessarily human, and which makes such laws valid.
6. But even if all the decrees and ordinances of consistories and synods were as the many oracles of God, they could not be more authentic than the decalogue. These commands cannot force obedience in human courts, either actively or passively, unless it is passed into law by men, and has received the mark of authority by the human court. This is the case even though the decalogue obliges the conscience, even under the Pagans.

²³ Moïse Amyraut, Lud Cappelli and Josué de La Place, *Theses theologicae in Academia Salmuriensi variis temporibus disputatae*, Saumur 1641.

From all the above, it is clear there is only one jurisdiction in external affairs which is common to the magistrate, the synods and the consistories. All the secondary acts made by a church, as a society (such as making decrees by majority vote; retaining or expelling members from its society; of remaining alone, or incorporating with other particular churches, and of obliging themselves to the fulfilment of laws and ordinances passed by common consent, etc.) are productions of a jurisdiction common to all sorts of societies and republics, small or great, and belonging as much to an academy or university of students, as to a college of physicians, or to a company of merchants. The first sort of acts made by a church, in the context of an assembly of the good gathered for the service of God, is not the production of human jurisdiction. Neither is it managed by the same dictates of other human societies which are not religious. In all its deliberations, it should not adhere to the plurality of votes, but to that part which is convinced in conscience that it is true and reasonable. As for the minister, they should carry out all the duties of their function, such as preaching, prayer, administering sacraments, visiting the sick, etc., whether they are commanded or prohibited by human jurisdiction. As for faithful people, they should follow the preaching of the word and the ordinances; submit to one another; render good for evil; examine all doctrines; cling to what is good; and imitate those of Berea, who did not simply rely on the words of St Paul but searched the scriptures to see if what he preached was true. In short, these types of ecclesiastical acts without jurisdiction, bear the image of the government of the schools of philosophers, as well as the assemblies of prophets every Sunday with faithful people, such as those of the Essenes who, as Mr Amyraut argues, did not claim any jurisdiction but only gathered to do and listen to some reading or to receive some doctrine from the mouth of the teachers. Now, these two types of acts are clearly seen in all kinds of human societies, such as in a college of physicians, who by the acts of the jurisdiction common to all kinds of societies make laws by majority vote of their members. They accept or reject such members as they please from their body, establish a dean or a president among themselves, and choose officers. But by other acts where there is no jurisdiction, they discuss properly about medicine, visit the sick, make orders or prescriptions, and give rules to their patients. When applied to the two types of acts that occur in churches, anyone with the slightest capacity in the world can grasp the true nature and concept of the so-called ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

But, Sir, whether you and I differ or not on these matters, I have never taken it upon myself to defend either the Independents or Independence, as your cause and your persons are wrongly called. It has only been incidentally and by chance, being sorry to see the reputation of good people suffer without reason and for Amyraut to make them the object of contempt and hatred, both of friends and enemies, portrayed as people without brains or good morals. It is not a weak argument in favour of the goodness of your cause that you have more charity towards him than he has towards you. This has always been the best indicator of where the truth lies: that the best cause makes people better, and that the best people, who have the most spirit of self-denial have the best cause – such as the reverend ministers of the Congregational way – and approach all kinds of dogmas with less biased and less prejudiced principles than others. This

consideration leads me to believe about myself that the goodness of my cause is accompanied by honesty and sincerity in its defence, especially since I imitate your patience by not giving injury for injury. Some are convinced of the reason and truth of my opinions. But they hesitate to abandon the power to govern and their long-held belief that excommunication is a divine ordinance. They argue that since it has been practised for the majority of centuries and has been approved by the French Confession of Faith²⁴ it can be usefully retained, as long as it is believed that men are more capable, by this pious fraud, of discipline and of respecting ordinances and ministers. Though in fact it was forged to be the principal instrument for fabricating the mystery of iniquity. Those people, I say, although convinced of the truth, have written to me to make me understand that I should have hidden this truth rather than have exposed it.²⁵ That having raised as much commotion against me by publishing it, as those craftsmen who cried out that great was Diana of the Ephesians,²⁶ I had thrown myself into trouble. That I had loosened the sinews and ligaments of government by which men are held bound to them and kept in fear and peace under the rod of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Others have accused me of being an enemy of all discipline and order, particularly for having weakened and shaken the discipline of the Reformed churches of France. However, both accusations have been refuted by the learned Minister of Dieppe and one of his colleagues, who hold that if my principles were accepted, the discipline of the churches of France would be established on more solid and secure foundations. For although there was no breach of church peace through their assertion that excommunication was considered an ordinance of Christ rather than a law of confederate discipline, it is a bondage of men's consciences when a yoke not of Christ is imposed upon them. For one can enjoy as profound a peace under a usurper, but *potior est periculosa libertas quieto servitio*, freedom accompanied by danger is better than peaceful slavery.²⁷ It is not an argument for the goodness of a cause when it accidentally produces rest rather than a good effect. But the main accusation with which I am charged is not only that I defame and belittle the calling of ministers, but also that I remove the ministry, which is a dark slander. On the contrary, I make their calling completely divine, not by succession of men, but by providence. I make it even less human in that I make it immediately derived from God, with men only concurring to recognise God's calling and the separation and choice He makes of a man for the great work of saving souls. This is done:

1. Through a general capacity for ministry contracted,²⁸ or obtained by evidence of the life and doctrine of a man, after a due examination of his capacity,

²⁴ *Confession de foy*, Geneva 1559.

²⁵ Du Moulin also made reference to Vauquelin's awareness of pressure against publishing the *Lettre du sieur Jean Dury*, 347.

²⁶ A reference to Acts xix.28.

²⁷ The phrase is typically attributed to the Roman politician and historian Sallust (86–c. 35 BC).

²⁸ Original 'contractée' is a typographical error with 'i' inserted in the feminine passive participle of the verb 'contracter', meaning here to contract something in terms of acquiring or developing it. There are no occurrences of 'contractée' in

- knowledge, and good morals; and also through a solemn invocation of God to obtain his blessing, through fasting and prayers, on the calling God makes of the man.
2. Through a specific capacity, when the minister is chosen to serve a particular church.
 3. By a licence granted to a man either by the magistrate, or by those who have power in churches or Synods in place of the magistrate, to use his ministry without being disturbed. For the power to grant a licence to exercise the function to which God, the church, and the merit of the person call him, is of the same nature as the power to excommunicate, suspend, and depose. These acts of jurisdiction are delegated by the magistrate or taken by mutual consent, which is in place of the magistrate, insofar as it is virtually within the order and discipline. The bishops formerly conferred authority in England by this magisterial authority, and today the synods in France give power to some chosen pastors to grant ordination. To put it briefly, just as a doctor is not created by jurisdiction but by institution, only those with jurisdictional power grant permission and licence to a person to practice what God, the man, and his studies have elevated him to. Just as the magistrate does not make a man a husband or a doctor, but only publicly and solemnly recognises that he is a doctor or a husband, likewise, men do not give any calling to pastors, but recognise God's calling in them. For in ordination, one must distinguish the acts of the ministers, as ministers, vested with a sacred function, from the acts as individuals endowed with jurisdiction either delegated or taken by mutual consent, or federated discipline, which, as I have said, makes up for the lack of a magistrate.

When well understood, this will clarify many controversies concerning the church and the jurisdiction and calling of pastors, and will silence our opponents, who ask our pastors the reason for their calling and about the succession of their chairs. As the calling of Pastors is directly from God, there is no need to accept a succession of persons, but only a succession of providence, to which our Reformers sometimes resort, as our confession states in Article 31, deferring more to God's mission than to that of men.²⁹ There is no inconvenience in asserting that God ordinarily calls pastors without the intervention of men, and that this exception that God sometimes raises people to the holy ministry in an extraordinary way is not an exception to the ordinary rule; that no one preaches the Gospel unless sent by God. It is only an exception with respect to the three aforementioned acts, which must ordinarily intervene before recognising that the calling is from God. These acts, when omitted out of necessity – such as in times of persecution and when the state of the Church is interrupted, I confess that in this regard it can

ARTFL-FRANTEXT, Chicago 1994, August 2022, at <[www.https://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/content/artfl-frantext](https://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/content/artfl-frantext)>.

²⁹ Du Moulin refers to Article 31 of the French Confession of Faith, which states that normally ministers should obtain an authoritative calling through election, but that impurity in the Church may result in God using exceptional methods.

be said that God sometimes sends pastors in an extraordinary manner as the Article says. Here, Sir, is a well-paved path, not only to respond to the Papists, who demand from our pastors that they show their succession and give a reason for their calling, but also to strengthen the calling of our pastors who seem to plead for the Roman Church and the visibility of their church. For if there is no ministry without ordination, and no ordination without a linear succession from the Apostles, our opponents will easily prove that, with the succession lacking, the Ministry and the Church, which is not without a Ministry, have also failed. I think as long as we grant these two points to the Roman Church, namely, 1. the necessity of succession, mission, and ordination of pastors by pastors, 2. ecclesiastical jurisdiction independent of secular powers, we will rather strengthen the Pope in his seat than shake him. I also think he has much more plausible reasons to maintain his state and to maintain possession of his jurisdiction and succession of chairs than the Presbyterians have to unseat him and defend their jurisdiction and successive ordination from man to man.

That being the case, who cannot see that our authors only use foils to fight the Pope and his hierarchy, bringing forth nothing more than paper and ink, in so many volumes that have been composed about the nature of the church, the primacy of the Pope, transubstantiation, purgatory, indulgences, and an infinity of errors with which the Roman Church is teeming, if it does not please God, not only to put the sword in their hands to carry out the execution, but also to teach them the place where the sword must strike, in order to deal a mortal blow to the Roman beast and to this man of sin, who has seduced and intoxicated the nations for so many centuries with his abominations. For this point is ecclesiastical jurisdiction, distinct and independent from secular powers, of which the succession of chairs is only a production and an appendix. If God, in his goodness, had wanted to use his servants' study to attack the Pope and the Roman hierarchy at that point, there would not have been a need for even a thousandth part of the paper and ink to accomplish it, compared to what has been used up to now to fight the other errors of the Roman Church, which they have only grazed, inflicting light wounds on this beast but leaving it alive. As old and infirm as I am, and even if I did not have to fight against so many prejudices deeply rooted in the minds of so many great men, even among my close acquaintances, I would feel strong enough, by myself, to show the world that ecclesiastical jurisdiction alone is the great buttress of the Roman hierarchy, and that once overthrown, it must fall to the ground at the same time. To attack the Roman Church by its jurisdiction is to shorten the time, matter, and path for our great writers Whitaker, Reynolds, du Plessis, Chamier, and Blondel in refuting the great unwieldy volumes³⁰ of

³⁰ Original 'bobulaires', an extremely rare word with no definition in the nine editions of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, at <www.dictionnaire-academie.fr/>, or ARTFL-FRANTEXT. Du Moulin was likely drawing on Calvin, who may have coined the word when discussing the writings of the Sorbonne theologians: Jean Calvin, *Institution de la religion Chrestienne*, Geneva 1560, 3.4.1. The Latin reads 'imme[n]sis voluminibus': Jean Calvin, *Institutio christianae religionis*, Geneva 1559, 3.4.1.

Baronius, Bellarmine, Stapleton, Tostatus, and others.³¹ You may well think that if any of the learned Presbyterians in England, or perhaps Croye, de Langle, Daille, Bochart, and Amyraut in France, were once persuaded of this truth that we uphold, how easy it would be for them, attacking the Roman Church by its jurisdiction, to unsettle the Bishop of Rome and refute the opponents.³²

But perhaps God wants to use weak and wretched instruments to accomplish this work so that the glory comes from God and not from men. The task would be half done if such instruments first cured so many great men of the prejudices that blind them to reason, starting with the Gentlemen of the National Synod gathered at Charenton in 1645, who condemned your church way without ever having seen your face, never mind having ever heard from your mouth how you differed from them. In this, they were no less blameworthy than the Fathers of the Council of Trent, who passed a sentence of condemnation against the Lutherans before they had heard them speak for themselves. Yet the error and the misunderstanding of both the Synod of Charenton and that of Rouen, in condemning the Independents without hearing them, show just as well that they were assemblies of good people, gathered in the name of Christ, who had the glory of Christ and the advancement of his Kingdom as their goal.³³ Likewise, the error of the Council of Trent of condemning the Lutherans before having heard them, showed that they were *slaves of the Pope* gathered in his name.³⁴ For the former did not err in the faith, and did not attribute to themselves the pronouncing of infallible determinations, declaring and showing in this their Christian humility and the spirit of Christ dwelling in them. Whereas the soundest and most truthful determinations of the Council of Trent (and much more their

³¹ William Whitaker (1548–95), a leading English theologian, academic and anti-Roman Catholic polemicist; John Rainolds (1549–1607), an English scholar and theologian; Philippe de Mornay (1549–1623), a French Huguenot writer, diplomat and founder of the Academy of Saumur; Daniel Chamier (1564–1621), a French Huguenot theologian, pastor and professor who played a significant role in organising the French Reformed Churches and dedicated most of his writing to anti-Roman Catholic polemics; Cesare Baronio (1538–1607), an Italian cardinal, historian and prominent Counter-Reformation writer best known for his twelve-volume *Annales ecclesiastici*, which aimed to defend the Roman Catholic Church against Protestant historiography; Roberto Bellarmine (1542–1621), an Italian Jesuit and cardinal, widely viewed as the Roman Catholics' leading apologist; Thomas Stapleton (1535–98), an English Roman Catholic controversialist, theologian and professor; Alonso Tostado (c. 1400–55), a Spanish Roman Catholic theologian, bishop and biblical commentator.

³² Jean de Croy (*fl.* 1615–55), a French Protestant author and minister who preached for the national synod in Charenton in 1645; Jean-Maximilien de Langle (1590–1674), a French Protestant minister, noted preacher and church administrator; Jean Daillé (1594–1670), a French Protestant minister, scholar and among the most prolific Huguenot authors; Samuel Bochart (1599–1667), a French Protestant scholar known for works on biblical geography and sacred history and highly regarded for his knowledge of ancient languages and expertise in biblical studies.

³³ Du Moulin said in a later letter that the conclusion of the synod at Rouen was a rumour spread to condemn him and Vauquelin, and that the synod had not condemned Independency: *Lettre du sieur Jean Dury*, 265 (misnumbered as 165).

³⁴ Latin original, 'Mancipia Papae'.

errors), leavened by the leaven of their claimed infallibility, show that this assembly was not led by the same spirit of Christ, who guided the others. But, without realizing it, I am composing a book instead of a letter; I beg you to forgive me for the pleasure I take in conversing with you, and to continue the favour of allowing me to always say, Sir,

I am your very humble and very affectionate servant, Lewis du Moulin.

From London, July 3, 1658.

Owen's second reply to Lewis Du Moulin

Though Owen's reply here is very short, Du Moulin expressed to Vauquelin that it was exactly what he was looking for in confirmation of his argument about Congregational views of synods. In his letter forwarding Owen's response, Du Moulin wrote to the Dieppe minister that,

I am sending you the letter from Dr Owen, which is short, but which silences those in France who, as you wrote to me, depict the Independents as the greatest heretics in the world and enemies of all order and discipline, and who abolish the use of synods. This will also clear me of the charge made against me of passing off my own imaginations as the beliefs of the Independents in my *Paraenesis*. It is evident from the letters of Dr Owen, Mr Lockyer,³⁵ and the testimony of Mr Burroughs³⁶ that I cite in Chapter 23 of my *Paraenesis*, which reports the sentiment of all his brothers who are called Independents and who wrote as much as ten years ago, that they all hold this same belief that I attribute to them.³⁷

This letter of Owen's was received when the publication was ready for the press, and was added by Gilles Dury because,

Mr du Moulin having hinted to him that it would have been desirable for the Anonymous person to have given him the opportunity to clear himself of the charge made against him, which is causing a great stir in France, namely that the Independents abolish the Synods, by their doctrine and their practice, the said Mr Owen refutes this slander in a few lines and shows clearly enough that Mr Amyraut has been barking up the wrong tree.³⁸

The timing of Owen's response raises the interesting possibility that this letter exchange with Du Moulin and the accusations from French Protestants had a direct impact on the decision of the Congregationalists to hold their first assembly at the Savoy Palace in October 1658 where they produced a confession of faith. The preface to this confession lists the need for greater association between Congregational churches and the answering of foreign and domestic critics as a

³⁵ Nicholas Lockyer (1611–85), Congregational minister and then chaplain to Oliver Cromwell. One of his letters was also printed in the *Lettre du sieur Jean Dury*.

³⁶ Jeremiah Burroughs (1599–1646), Congregationalist minister and a member of the Westminster Assembly.

³⁷ Dury, *Lettre du sieur Jean Dury*, 316–17.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 313–14.

reason for its production.³⁹ This international background to the Congregational gathering at Savoy has not previously been noticed.⁴⁰

John Owen's second reply to Lewis Du Moulin

[*Lettre du sieur Jean Dury*, 314–16]

Translated from the English

I have received yours, and I was surprised to hear that my hastily written letter is to be made public. But, as I remember, I should only blame myself in this matter, having given you full power to do with it as you please. On the matter of synods, I am astonished that anyone is offended by our views about them – I mean those that can properly be called synods. We maintain that they are instituted by Christ and according to this belief, we use them. In our last meeting when we gathered in Oxford, the first thing we recommended to our churches was an association of churches in the same neighbourhood to provide counsel and advice, and where any particularly difficult case arises or any matter that closely concerns all or several of them. We maintain that it is an ordinance of Christ that there be a convocation of churches in their elders and delegates to consider and determine the nature of whatever matter is referred to them for consultation. Sir, I do not have the leisure to say more, but only to assure you that I am,

Your very humble and very affectionate servant, John Owen.

Oxford, Sept. 8, 1658.

³⁹ *A declaration of the faith and order owned and practised in the Congregational churches in England*, London: J. P., 1658 (Wing N.1489).

⁴⁰ This author's PhD thesis will discuss this neglected aspect of the Congregationalists' assembly and confession of faith.